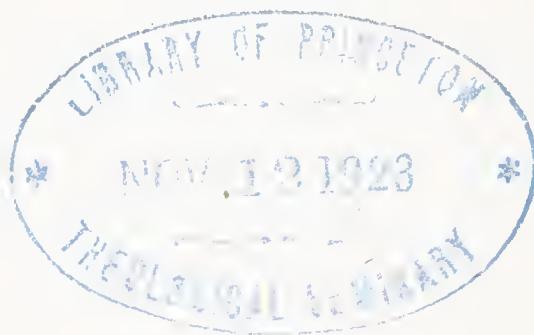


JAMES

THE EPISTLE OF REALITY

PHILIP MAURO





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James:

The Epistle of Reality

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James:

The Epistle of Reality

By PHILIP MAURO

AUTHOR OF THE WORLD AND ITS GOD, THE NUMBER OF MAN, LIFE IN THE WORD, EVOLUTION AT THE BAR, THE SEVENTY WEEKS AND THE GREAT TRIBULATION, THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN, WHAT IS IT? ETC., ETC.

*“Be ye doers of the Word and
not hearers only”*



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Foreword

WE send forth these meditations upon the Epistle of James under the deep conviction that that portion of the Word of God has special application to these last and "perilous" times, and that it contains special lessons and admonitions for the present generation of believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. The last chapter of the Epistle in particular brings us to a place in the stretch of years of this Gospel dispensation, where "the coming of the Lord" is imminent, and where conditions are such that the saints are not to expect or pray for relief from them, but rather to bear them with patience until He comes. This will be pointed out more fully in our comments upon Chapter V.

Such being the character of the Epistle of James, we count it a duty, as well as a great privilege, to put forth a volume designed to press its highly practical and exceedingly precious message upon the attention of the household of faith.

Moreover, our conviction as to the present application of James is in nowise weakened by the fact that, in our day, a doctrine has sprung up and spread itself in orthodox and evangelical circles, according to which the message and ministry of James are not for this Gospel dispensation at all, but for "Jewish Christians" (to use a current expression) who are to be converted after "the church" shall have been taken away from the earth. Rather is our conviction as to the present application and importance of James

greatly strengthened by that phase of "modernism" which seeks to cast discredit upon it; for we see in that new doctrine an attempt of the "spirit of error" to despoil God's people in this day of truth which was intended specially *for them* by the "Spirit of Truth." For it is a matter of the deepest significance that the particular phase of modernism to which we refer is confined to those groups of believers who hold, and who prominently feature, the premillennial and imminent coming again of the Lord Jesus Christ.

This little volume is sent forth with the author's "heart's desire and prayer to God" that it may, under His blessing, be of some service to His beloved people in the increasingly perilous times of the end.

PHILIP MAURO.

R. R. 1, Framingham, Mass.

October, 1923.

James:

The Epistle of Reality

CHAPTER I.

UNITY AND DIVERSITY. THE TEACHING AND THE TEACHERS

“Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:4).

THE Scriptures of the New Testament have for their manifest purpose to present JESUS CHRIST AND HIS DOCTRINE. Christ is the PERSON in Whom men are to believe for their salvation; and His “TEACHING” is that which is to shape in all particulars the lives and walk of His disciples. *Christ Himself* is presented to us in the four Gospels. His *doctrine* is presented in His own utterances recorded in the Gospels, and also in Epistles written by certain of His servants, who were chosen and equipped for that ministry, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

It is recorded of those who were first converted under the preaching of the gospel with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, that they “continued stedfastly in *the apostles’ doctrine*,” that is to say, in all things which the apostles taught (Acts 2:42).

From this it appears that the apostles were the instruments chosen and qualified by the Lord to “teach” His people at the beginning, or more accurately we might say, to impart to them His own

teaching; and prominent among those who were chosen for that great ministry was one whom Paul speaks of as "James the Lord's brother" (Gal. 1:19). To him the Lord appeared specially (1 Cor. 15:7); and by him the decisions of the Holy Spirit, and of the church at Jerusalem were announced (Acts 15:13).*

It is a part of God's wise plan that His "doctrine," which is one harmonious whole and is invariably mentioned in the New Testament in the singular—always *the doctrine*, never the doctrines—should be imparted to His people through men who differed greatly among themselves in their respective make-up, and whose diverse characteristics appear very distinctly in their respective writings. It is highly important that we should take note both of *the oneness of the doctrine* and of *the diversity* of the ways and aspects wherein that doctrine is presented by the several apostles and teachers who were commissioned by the Lord to set it forth, and to give it its final and complete form for all time.

First of all then, let us fix in our minds, and keep always in view, the great fact that "the doctrine" is ever the same. The Holy Spirit has taken pains to

*Josephus, in his *Antiquities of the Jews* (Bk. XX, IX:1), records the death of James, in the days of Albinus, who succeeded Festus as the Roman procurator of Judea. When the apostle Paul made his last visit to Jerusalem, James was there (Acts 21:18). This was in the days of Felix. He was succeeded soon after by Festus, whose term of office was short. Josephus says: "Festus was now dead, and Albinus was upon the road, so he (Ananus, the high priest) assembled the sanhedrim of judges, and brought before them *the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ, whose name was James*, and some others; and when he had formed an accusation against them as breakers of the law, he delivered them to be stoned." But, according to Whiston, James was not put to death at that time.

make this quite plain. To begin with "the doctrine" (or teaching) of Christ is spoken of about forty times in the New Testament, and without exception the word is, as already stated, used in the singular. This is the more impressive because of the marked contrast with those passages which speak of "the *doctrines* of men," "the *doctrines* of demons," "diverse and strange *doctrines*," etc. Here we have a strong, though an unobtrusive, witness to the fact that, whereas there is confusion and contrariety in all other "teachings," the "teaching" of Christ which is the law of His Kingdom, is ever in perfect harmony with itself.

If we keep this fact constantly in mind, it will guard us against the error and folly of setting the teaching of one apostle against another; and also from the error of supposing, for example, that, as between Paul and James, there is the slightest contradiction or disagreement, whether in regard to the justifying of the sinner, or in regard to the gospel preached by them respectively, or in regard to any other point of the one and unchangeable "doctrine of Christ."

The very fact that Paul went up to Jerusalem "by revelation" to compare his preaching with that of the other apostles (Gal. 2:1) is proof that they were all charged to speak the same thing.

Moreover Paul expressly declares—and it would be well for some of our modern teachers to take note of this—that whether the gospel were preached by himself, or by those who were apostles before him, it was always the same identical gospel (1 Cor. 15:1-11).

As to the diversity of gift between the several writers of the various Epistles, written at different times

to the one "household of faith," which diversity is very apparent in their respective writings, it is easy to see that God had a wise purpose in this. For obviously the diversity upon which we are remarking serves the great end of instructing the people of God in the way of righteousness, far better than it would have been served if the teaching had been given to them through one human channel only. For one apostle dwells upon and exemplifies one feature or aspect of the truth, while another brings to our minds a different feature or aspect of the same truth. Thus we are stimulated to compare Scripture with Scripture; and by getting here a little and there a little, we build up a solid and well balanced structure of "sound doctrine."

PAUL AND JAMES

Specifically as between Paul and James, it is evident, as Augustus Meander has pointed out, that Paul presents "the doctrine of Christ" (or for a shorter term we might say "Christianity"—by which we mean all that Christ is, and did, and taught) in its great contrast with the Phariseeism, or false Judaism (Gal. 1:13, 14), in which he had been reared, and from which he was so miraculously delivered and "separated." James, on the other hand, wholly ignores Phariseeism, or false Judaism, and views Christianity as the consummation and completion of *true* Judaism. He sees Christ as completing and perfecting the revelation given through the prophets; whereas Paul, while not failing to exhibit the continuity of the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ with that of the Old Testament, dwells mainly upon Christ as antagonizing and overthrowing the doctrines of the Phari-

sees and Rabbis, by whom the truth of God had been grossly distorted and perverted.

For it is important that we should remember, in reading the Gospels, that in the Judaism of Christ's day there were current among the Jews, first "*the Scriptures*," being the Septuagint translation into vernacular Greek of "the Law and the Prophets" (what is now our Old Testament), and second "*the traditions of the elders*," being a complete mass of doctrines, handed down by word of mouth (as Peter says "received by tradition from your fathers," 1 Pet. 1:18), but later on reduced to writing (from about the third century, A. D.) and known as the Talmud, Mishnah, etc. Now one of the serious conditions of that day was that "the traditions of the elders" were more venerated and held to be of higher authority than the "writings" (Scriptures). For it was one of the fictions of the Rabbis that the "traditions" as well as the "law" had been received by Moses, and that the former had been handed down by word of mouth because they were too sacred to be committed to writing.

Thus our Lord, in presenting *His* "doctrine," was confronted with the complex task of (1) disentangling the Scriptures from the oral traditions; (2) establishing the former as that which "cannot be broken," and whereof "not one jot or tittle should pass away"; (3) overthrowing the traditions of the elders; and (4) restating the law of God in the form in which it was to be received by His own people, and written in their hearts. This truly was a stupendous task.

As an illustration of what we mean by the contrast between the ministry of Paul and that of James, we would point to the fact that, when Paul speaks of

justification by faith, he seeks specially to clear that precious truth from all connection with those dead legal "works" wherewith the Rabbis had cumbered it, and whereby they had virtually destroyed it; whereas James, in speaking of the very same truth, ignores the legalism of the Rabbis, and lays emphasis upon the fact that the "faith" which God counts for righteousness is a "live" or *real* faith, manifesting itself as such by its works."

Thus, whereas Paul defines true righteousness by distinguishing it from those "works," which form no part of it, James defines it by the "works" which do specially characterize it and prove its existence. Hence, as between these two views, while there is diversity in the presentation of the doctrine, there is perfect agreement as regards the doctrine itself. It follows that, for a complete and well-balanced view of justification by faith, we must study it in both Paul's and James' epistles.

The difference to which we have alluded above finds its immediate explanation (though God's hand was behind it all) in the fact that, while James was brought up from his childhood in the same family with the Lord, and in familiar intercourse with Him during the days of His flesh, and hence had his early ideas more or less shaped by that intercourse, Paul never came into contact with the Lord and never heard His teachings on earth, but on the contrary was steeped, during his early years, in the teachings of the Rabbis (Acts 22:3). Hence he was, at his conversion, wrenched violently away from a complete system of dead religious works. How inevitable then that "the Gospel of God concerning His Son," to which he found himself suddenly "separated" (Rom.

1:1-3), would always appear in his eyes in its *complete antagonism* to that system in which he had been reared, and of which he had been so blindly zealous.

JEWS AND GENTILES

In order to understand the relations of the several books of the New Testament we must bear also in mind the great difference which then existed between Jews and Gentiles, and must remember that the Jew deemed himself the monopolist of Divine favor, while regarding Gentiles as so unclean and defiling that it was forbidden to go into their houses and eat with them (Acts 10:28). But the one gospel was now to be presented on precisely the same terms to these two diverse and antagonistic classes. Because of this, and because the opportunities for the gospel were at the first enormously greater among the Jews than among Gentiles, there was a division of labor and responsibility between the apostles, according to which it was arranged that James, Peter, John and the others should labor among the Jews, while Paul and Barnabas should go to the Gentiles (Gal. 2:7-9). This intensive preaching of the gospel in Judea and Jerusalem at the first, was evidently decreed because of the approaching destruction of the Holy City and the dispersion of the nation.

Manifestly it was of the utmost importance, on the one hand, that the Jews should be shown that Christianity was *not a break with Judaism*, but was the true completion and consummation thereof, in fulfilment of the law and the prophets; and, on the other hand, that Gentiles should learn the *universal character* of the Kingdom of God, which Christ had come to introduce. Hence the difference between Paul's

epistles, in which the latter truth is emphasized, and those of James and Peter, though all were presenting the same doctrine of Christ.

It is particularly noticeable that in James (as in Peter, John and Jude) we find *nothing whatever* of those Jewish elements which were fulfilled and done away in Christ—nothing of circumcision, sacrifices, priesthood, sabbaths, feast days—all are gone; and we find ourselves manifestly on “Christian” ground, the only ministers referred to being “teachers” (3:1), and “the elders of the church” (5:14). The use of the word “synagogue” (2:2, translated *assembly*) is not an exception, for that word signifies merely a meeting-place in the broadest sense. It would be appropriate to any hall, building, or gathering-place of the Lord’s people at the present day.

This characteristic of the Epistle of James should be carefully noted in view of the novel doctrine, referred to in our Foreword, according to which James is declared to be “Jewish” and therefore to be treated as belonging not to the dispensation of the gospel, but to some future era. The destructive character of such teaching is apparent. It is, however, completely overthrown, not only by the contents of the Epistle, but by the remarkable absence therefrom of all “Jewish” elements.

THE CONTINUITY OF THE DOCTRINE

Let us then keep in mind that, in the Epistle of James, we shall see the unbroken continuity of God’s dealings with men, begun in the call of Abraham, and continued without a break through that believing remnant of Israel (the *Israelites indeed*) who repented upon hearing the Word of the Kingdom, and

who, through faith in the One Whom John the Baptist announced, were born again, and entered into that Kingdom.

The line of the true "Israel," along which God's purpose was carried on, became indeed very slender in the days of Christ's presence on earth, but it was never broken. And the little company of those who "received Him," and who bridged the interval between the Old Covenant and the New, became the nucleus of a people, to which the Lord in glory has been "adding" ever since. And to that one company have *all* the New Testament Scriptures been given in fulfilment of Christ's distinct promise recorded in John 14:26 and 16:13.

For while, in the bringing in of this present dispensation of the Holy Spirit, there was indeed a *complete break* with "Israel after the flesh," that is with the earthly nation, and also with the spurious Judaism of the Rabbis and Pharisees, there was nevertheless a *perfect union* with, and a carrying on and completion of, the *true* Judaism; the connecting link being, as already stated, that remnant of the people which repented under the preaching of John, and were baptized of him confessing their sins.

Both sides of this one truth are plainly taught by Paul in chapters 9, 10 and 11 of Romans, and are illustrated by the parable of the Olive Tree (Rom. 11:17-24). In that illustration the root and stem represent the true Israel from Abraham to Christ (the "root" and "fatness"), while the natural branches "broken off" represent the unbelieving mass of the nation with its *false* Judaism, from which the true had to be cleared.

For, according to Galatians 3:17-19, the dispensa-

tion of the law was a parenthesis, which interrupted for a certain period the dispensation of God's dealings in grace ("by promise") with Abraham, just as the Hagar regime, which resulted in Ishmael, interrupted the family relations of Abraham with the true wife, Sarah, who represents the gospel-dispensation (Gal. 4:25-28; Isa. 54:1-13).

We see, then, that there was not only an unbroken continuity in the dealings of God with *that people* whom He had called in Abraham (the believing remnant of Christ's day being the living connecting link), but there was also a continuity in the *doctrine of God*; for the spiritual essence and substance of "the law and the prophets" is incorporated in "the doctrine of Christ," which embraces the completeness of the revelation of God, both as to His Godhead, His redemptive work, His eternal purposes, and His will for His people (i. e., His "law").

THE ISRAEL OF GOD

James, then, views Christ as being Himself the true "Israel"—the "true Vine"; even as He is presented by Isaiah in chapters 49-53. In that great prophecy He is, in fact, expressly called by the name "Israel"; and it is highly significant that, in the immediate context, He is spoken of as "A light to *the Gentiles*," and as God's salvation to "*the end of the earth*." The passage begins with these words: "The Lord hath called Me from the womb; from the bowels of My mother hath He made mention of My Name"—(see Matt. 1:21). "And He hath made My mouth like a sharp sword . . . And said unto Me, Thou art *My Servant, O Israel*, in Whom I will be glorified" (Isa. 49:1-7).

Since therefore our Lord is Himself the true "Israel," all His members are embraced in that wonderful name (which signifies *A Prince with God*). It becomes, through Christ, to Whom alone it belongs in its fullness, the name of the redeemed people, which God is now taking out of all nations *for His Name*, as this very James declared (Acts 15:14). In this sense it is used also by Paul, who speaks of "the Israel of God" (Gal. 6:16), thus marking a contrast with those who are Israelites merely by natural descent, and whom he carefully designates as "Israel *after the flesh*" (1 Cor. 10:18).

"WE ARE THE CIRCUMCISION"

The same truth we are here dwelling upon (namely, the continuity of that "Israel" which was *real* and *inward*, while that which was outward merely was cast off at the beginning of our era) is brought clearly into view by Paul's teaching in Romans 2:28, 29; 9:6-8; Philippians 1:3, to the effect that, in God's sight, a man is not a "Jew" who is one outwardly, "but he is a Jew which is one inwardly." And very definite indeed are the words, "For *we are the circumcision*, who worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh" (Phil. 1:3).

The apostle John likewise makes it plain that the words used of old to designate God's earthly people belong in their highest sense to His true people of this era. For John speaks of "the brethren" who "for His Name's sake" went forth "*taking nothing of the Gentiles*" (3 John 7). It is clear that, in this verse, the word "Gentiles" is used as a general designation of those who are not the true people of God.

In fact it is not possible to understand it otherwise. We doubt not that, when our Lord speaks (Rev. 2:9 and 3:9) of those who "say they are Jews, and are not," He is referring to some who falsely claimed to be the people of God.

CHAPTER II.

ISRAEL AND JUDAH RE-UNITED DURING THE CAPTIVITY.

NO "TEN LOST TRIBES." NO BASIS EXISTS FOR

ANGLO-ISRAELISM. THE TRIAL OF FAITH.

"THE JEWS' RELIGION"

From what has been already set forth it will be seen to be strictly in keeping with James' view of the gospel that, in addressing himself to the household of faith, he should use terms which show that he regarded them as the true "Israel of God." In this light it is easy to see the significance of his address, "to the Twelve Tribes Scattered Abroad." Two things appear therein; first, that James views the people of God as being now united into one Kingdom, in fulfilment, in a spiritual sense, of Ezekiel's prophecy, that God would make Judah and Ephraim "one nation" (Ezek. 37:15-22); and *second* that the people of God, though constituting one "holy nation" (1 Pet. 2:9), are at present "scattered abroad." This view, namely, that the division between Judah and Ephraim is now done away, and that God's people are one in His contemplation, appears also in Paul's words to Herod Agrippa, to whom he spoke of "our twelve tribes" (Acts 26:7).

It would seem that the fusion between the house of Israel and the house of Judah took place during the Babylonian captivity, and that, from thenceforth, the disruption is regarded as at an end. The later prophecies of Ezekiel are addressed to "the house of *Israel*" (Ch. 40:4; 43:10, &c.). Daniel, though he was of the captivity of Judah (Dan. 1:6), pleads for

“*all Israel*,” and tells of “confessing my sin, and the sin of *my people Israel*” (9:7, 11, 20), which implies that the long sundered people were now at length united, in their common captivity, into which Israel went first. The decree of Cyrus, under which the captivity was ended, refers to Jehovah as the God of *Israel* (Ezr. 1:3).

Ezra describes the returning captives as “the men of the people *of Israel*” (2:2); and he says that “the Nethinims dwelt in their cities and *all Israel* in their cities” (2:70). At the dedication of the rebuilt temple, there was a sin offering “for *all Israel*, according to the number of *the tribes of Israel*” (6:17). Further on we read of “The people *of Israel* and the priests” (9:1); of a great congregation “*out of Israel*” (10:1); of “the Levites and *all Israel*” (10:5).

Nehemiah likewise speaks of “the children *of Israel*” (8:17), “the residue *of Israel*” (11:20), and of *all Israel* in the days of Zerubbabel.” The later prophets also speak in similar terms (Zech. 12:1), recognizing no distinction between Judah and Ephraim; and the very last of the Old Testament prophecies is entitled, “The Burden of the Word of the Lord *to Israel* by Malachi.”

These records serve, among other useful ends, to dispose of all speculations concerning the supposed “lost ten tribes.” For those speculations utterly disregard the fact that the decree of Cyrus ended the captivity, not of the two tribes only, but that of “*all Israel*.” They also serve to dispose of that strange modern delusion known as *Anglo-Israelism*, which has found many adherents, notwithstanding it is opposed by all the pertinent facts of Scripture, history, and philology.

The apostle Peter also who, like James, views Christianity as the continuation and consummation of true Judaism, rather than as a break with the false, addresses his first epistle to "the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia," &c. (literally "to the sojourners of the dispersion" (1 Pet. 1:1).

These superscriptions remind us that the gospel was, by the Lord's express command (Lu. 24:47; Acts 1:8; Rom. 1:16), preached first to those who were Jews according to the flesh, and drew its first converts from them. This in itself is proof that God was not severing His relations with His ancient people, and that there is no warrant whatever for such an expression as "the Gentile Church." But it should not be necessary to say (nor would be, but for false teaching of recent origin which has found acceptance in certain quarters) that *all* the Epistles, regardless of the particular company to which they were severally addressed in the first instance, were dictated by the One Spirit, and are for the one Kingdom of God, wherein are no distinctions of nationality or the like (Gal. 3:28).

THE DISPERSION

The location of the particular churches addressed by James is not indicated, only that they were outside of Judea. The word *diaspora* or *dispersion* (1 Pet. 1:1) was in common use at that time (see John 7:35). It included all those numerous communities of Jews which existed in various countries, some to the East, called the "Eastern Dispersion," but more to the West, along the shores of the Mediterranean Sea. Peter's first Epistle was addressed to converts from among the Jews who lived in five of the prov-

inces of what is now known as Turkey in Asia, or Asia Minor. Among these was Galatia, to whose churches Paul also wrote an epistle.

But the Epistle of James is more general than that of Peter, being not limited to any specified localities. From this it may be inferred that the conditions rebuked, and the errors corrected, by this Epistle, were prevalent, to some extent, in all those churches which were composed mainly of converts from among the Jews.

For, in reading the Epistles, we should remember that every man when saved brings into the company of saints to which he is added *many of the traits and habits of thought and life which characterized him as a natural man*. Therefore, the work of conforming him to God's pattern requires patient dealing in detail with his old ways, habits, notions, prejudices, religious traditions, and the like. As to these matters there would be, of course, considerable differences between men who had been brought up as Jews, and men who had been brought up as Gentiles; though the corrupt *nature and tendencies of the heart*, from which spring all things that are contrary to God and His ways, are the same in all.

The first Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians reveals the nature of the evils which were mostly prevalent among those saints who had been Gentiles in the flesh; whereas, the Epistle of James reveals the evils that were more conspicuous among those who were by nature Israelites.

“THE JEWS’ RELIGION”

In Galatians 1:13, 14 Paul refers by name to “the Jews’ religion” (in the original it is the single word

Judaism); and his writings abound in references to it and denunciations of it. Judaism had come to be, in course of time, a system of *mere externals*; that is to say, a system consisting wholly of rites and ceremonies, forms and observances, rituals, feast days, and various practices of human origin, for which strict rules had been laid down to govern even the pettiest details. Regulations were prescribed as to the precise width of the border of a garment, as to the exact number of times the hands should be washed during the observance of the Passover supper, etc. Heated disputes—involving long and subtle argumentations—were carried on between opposing schools over such trivial matters as whether, in the course of a certain ceremony, the hands should be washed only to the wrist, or the forearm also to the elbow. To such “foolish and unlearned” disputation which “gender strifes,” Paul makes occasional reference, as in 2 Timothy 2:23.

The groundwork of Jewish ritual—the sacrifices, priestly ordinances, feast days, etc., had been appointed by God Himself. But they were only “the shadows of good things to come,” being but symbols of those great spiritual realities which were to be fulfilled in Christ. To these, however, the Rabbis had added an immense mass of traditional observances; and furthermore, the spiritual content of Judaism, as it existed of old, had entirely disappeared. Therefore, in Christ’s day, the “Jews’ religion” was merely an elaborate system of external forms, comprising an enormous mass of wearisome details, and demanding no change whatever in the *hearts* of its adherents.

For the purpose of an intelligent reading of James

it is needful to know, in a general way at least, what that system was out of which saved Jews were called by the Gospel. When we have this information we can readily understand in its light why James, throughout his Epistle, insists so strongly upon that which is *inward* and *real*. Those who, all their lives, had been taught to practice, and to rely upon, a religion consisting solely of *outward acts*, which an un-renewed man could perform with even mechanical precision, needed to be strongly impressed as to the utter worthlessness of all such religious doings. They needed to be continually reminded of the long-forgotten fact that God looks upon *the heart*, and that only what is inward and real, in the matter of worship, is accepted by Him. We will have frequent occasion to notice, in the course of our present study, how often and how forcibly James calls upon his readers to abandon externalities, and to apply themselves to that which is of the inner man.

In this connection we would call to mind that Peter also enforces the same great lesson when he reminds "the sojourners of the dispersion" that they had been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ *from their vain manner of life received by tradition from their fathers* (1 Pet. 1:18). That "vain" or empty manner of life received from their fathers was *Rabbinism*, or the *traditional Judaism* of Christ's day, in all its barrenness, and in all its corruption of the truth of God. It was that which Christ so sternly denounced as a system which made the word of God of none effect.

But we are not to suppose, because first-century Judaism no longer exists in a practical sense, that therefore the lessons of James are now out of date.

Such is far from being the case; for the very same traits of human nature have produced, even out of the doctrine of Christ, a system or systems of religion which are, in all essential characteristics, the same as that which, in the past era, was produced out of the law and the prophets. Hence the lessons of James are as much needed today as in apostolic times; and indeed as much more as the corrupted "christian religion" of our day exceeds in magnitude the corrupted "Jews' religion" of theirs. In both cases the thing to be dealt with is a religious system of *mere external acts*, wherein the unrenewed man may be quite proficient, and in which he can take part as well as—indeed far better than—the man who is of the faith of Christ.

Nor are we to suppose that the need of these practical lessons is confined to those who are connected with some one or other of the great religious systems of Christendom. For a man may be completely separated from all the sects and systems of our times, and may acknowledge fellowship only with such as abhor every sort of religious formality and ceremonial, and yet be himself a mere externalist, resting content with the correctness of his position, and with his supposedly strict conformity to the apostolic patterns of church order and practice. In fact it is *precisely where the outward observances are of the simplest character* that the lack of *reality* is most to be feared, because least suspected.

Therefore we would earnestly commend the lessons of James to all who wish not to be resting upon a mere shell of religion, whether highly ornate or severely plain. For there is the gravest danger at this present time that many, who think they are com-

pletely separated from all religious formalism, and who pride themselves that they listen only to the true Gospel and to the soundest of sound doctrine, are in reality deceiving their own selves, and are actually in the same class with those who seek only to make clean *the outside* of the cup and platter.

CHAPTER III

FAITH AND PATIENCE. TRUE WISDOM. CHRISTIAN EQUALITY

The style of James' teaching strongly resembles that of the Lord Himself in His Sermon on the Mount. And James follows the Lord's teaching closely, not in style only, but in its substance also; for he takes up, amplifies, and applies specifically, such of the Lord's commandments given in the Sermon on the Mount as are best suited to the condition and needs of those whom he addresses.

He begins abruptly with a word of encouragement concerning temptations (or trials). From this it may be gathered that the saints here addressed were in conditions of stress and difficulty. Very likely they were undergoing at the hands of their unbelieving countrymen what the Lord foretold when He said, "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely for My sake" (Mat. 5:11). For James takes up the same word, "Blessed," saying, "Behold we count them happy (*blessed*) which endure" (5:11). Through the comfort afforded by the words of Christ those of His people who suffer affliction for His sake are not to be cast down on that account, but on the contrary they are to "rejoice and be exceeding glad." In perfect agreement with this exhortation of Christ, James begins his message with the words, "My brethren, count it *all joy* when ye fall into diverse temptations (or trials)" (Jam. 1:2; see also 1 Pet. 4:12-14).

This is just the reverse of the ordinary and natural view of afflictions, *particularly to Jews* who had been always accustomed to regard earthly prosperity and blessings as tokens of the favor of God, and adversi-

ties as tokens of His displeasure. Hence the very first words of James make it plain that we are no longer upon Jewish ground, but are in a dispensation where all the providential dealings of God have a spiritual bearing. *This view of suffering characterizes the entire Epistle of James, and the first of Peter also.*

The reason why the saints of God were to take this extraordinary view of trials—a view which to the natural understanding is utter “foolishness”—is that the trial of their *faith* works out *patience*. Thus James devotes his very first instruction to that which lies at the foundation of the doctrine of Christ—*faith*. The prominence given to this word “*faith*” in the Epistle of James, and the space occupied in setting forth what real *faith* is (in contradistinction to what often goes by that name) is a further and a strong proof that the portion of Scripture we are now studying deals not with Old Testament or “*Jewish*” things (in the national and material sense) but with that which is, in the very highest degree, characteristic of Christianity.

That great word *faith* (and the idea of *faith* expressed by other words) is to be found in every Book of the New Testament, and practically upon every page thereof. This brings to view *one of the most marked differences between the Old Testament and the New*. For in the former the word *faith* (ignoring the negative statement in Deuteronomy 32:20) is found *but once*, and that is in the passage which serves as a basis of New Testament doctrine—“*The just shall live by faith*” (Hab. 2:4).*

*In the important passage, in Genesis 15:6 where it is recorded that Abraham “*believed* in the Lord, and He counted it to him for righteousness,” the literal reading is “*And he amened the Lord*.” This is the first occurrence of the word *amen*.

This difference should prompt us to meditate upon and to rejoice in the wondrous grace of God displayed by Him through the New Covenant, whereby the tenderest relation with Himself is granted to all who have "*the faith* of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of Glory" (Jam. 2:1). How vast the difference between this and the temporary relationship offered to one nation only under the Old Covenant, and upon the condition of strict obedience (Ex. 19:5, 6)!

Faith is such a vital matter to the children of God that it must needs be put to the test, first in order to prove that it is genuine, and second to purge and strengthen it. Hence believers are brought into conditions—"manifold temptations"—which test or prove them; and if the faith they profess be real, they will be able to stand against, and even to move in a course directly contrary to, the pressure of things around them; and contrary also to all the inclinations of their natural hearts.

That the trial of faith for the purposes stated is of much importance in the eyes of the Lord appears from the fact that Peter also lays great stress upon it at the beginning of his first Epistle. In 1 Peter 1:6 we have the identical expression, "manifold temptations," in the well known passage which declares that the trial of our faith is more precious than that of gold which perishes.

The relation of *faith* to *patience* is also declared in Hebrews 6:12, 13, and again in that great passage beginning, "For ye have need of *patience*," and extending through chapter 11. It is only in proportion as we realize our "need of patience" that we can count it all joy when we fall into manifold trials, whereby patience is worked out.

But the closest resemblance, both in form and substance, to the teaching of James is to be found in the last place where, in view of current ideas, we should probably expect to find it, that is to say, in the writings of Paul, who also (in Romans 5:1-3) traces the connection between *faith*, when subjected to trial, and *patience*. We quote the familiar words, “being justified *by faith* we glory in *tribulations* also, knowing that *tribulation worketh patience*.” Here, as also in James, we have the words *faith*, *tribulation*, *worketh out*, *patience*, and *rejoicing* when undergoing trials. The correspondence is remarkable; and it is particularly pertinent to call attention to it in these days when there is a disposition in certain quarters to separate the teaching of James from that of Paul and, in fact, to banish the former from this Christian dispensation entirely.

To James the object in view, and which is to be attained through trials, is so important that he exhorts those who are being thus tested to let patience have her perfect or complete work, that they may be (in this sense) perfect and entire, lacking nothing. This teaching is much needed, seeing that our natural way is to make every effort to escape out of the common trials of life, often not even giving a thought to God’s purpose in permitting them. James returns to this lesson in the last chapter, where he refers us to the trials of Job, and to the fact that the Lord had a purpose or “end” (“the end of the Lord”) in view, which was to lead Job into a true knowledge of God, and to bless him in the end with double what he had at the beginning.

Likewise in verse 12 of chapter 1 the “blessed” outcome is declared in the words, “Blessed is the man

that endureth temptation; for when he is tried he shall *receive the crown of life.*"

TRUE WISDOM

But, as already stated, this view of trials and afflictions is directly contrary to nature. Indeed, to the wisdom of the world it is utter foolishness. Hence, in order to act according to it, *another sort of wisdom* is needed. To that great need the writer of the Epistle now addresses himself, saying: "If any of you lack *wisdom*, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally (or with simplicity), and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him."

The thought of the natural man is that wisdom is to be had through long and patient study of the writings of the ancients, through courses in philosophy, through schools and universities. Particularly amongst the Jews of those days was it a settled conviction that the Rabbis were the sources of true wisdom, which was to be had only through their schools. They were held in the highest reverence, their persons being regarded as almost sacred; and the most exaggerated and absurd deference was paid to their utterances. Hence this word of James, which bade any who desired wisdom to seek it, *not of the Rabbis, but directly of God*, was radically opposed to the ideas which (notwithstanding the bright example of Solomon, 1 Kings 3:5-12) prevailed throughout Jewry. This subject of heavenly wisdom is taken up again in the beautiful passage at the end of chapter 3.

God *gives*, and gives "liberally." But the word means more than that, its primary significance being "with simplicity," that is, purely and simply as

a gift, without any exactions or stipulations, or demanding any return.

There is, however, an important qualification, to which the most careful attention should be paid. “But let him ask *in faith*, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth (or doubteth) is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed.”

So everything rests upon *faith*. Here again we meet one of the most important lessons taught by Christ—*praying in faith*. As He said in Mark 11:24, “What things soever ye desire when ye pray, *believe that ye receive them*, and ye shall have them.” James would impress upon us the great difference between the mere *external saying of prayers*, or going through forms of devotion (in which in our day millions of unconverted churchgoers engage) and the *real inward asking*, in simplicity and confidence, of One Who is *known* as “the Giver of every good and perfect gift.” The same lesson is taught by the Lord in Matthew 6. See also 1 John 3:22, and 5:14, 15.

James tells us that the man who wavereth (or doubteth) is like a wave of the sea, driven by the wind. A wave of the sea is active, and even seems to be advancing; but in reality it gets nowhere. Such a man is not to think that he shall receive anything of the Lord.

Should we not then ask ourselves how much of our praying is no more than the tossings of a wave of the sea, and just as ineffective to accomplish anything useful? And indeed is it not true that when we have prayed (as we suppose) it is often the case that we do not really *expect* to “*receive anything from the Lord*,” and would be greatly astonished indeed if our prayers were answered? Is it not true of us, as James

says in chapter 4:2, "Ye have not, because ye ask not"?

The contrast to the double-minded (literally, *double-souled*) man, who, like a wave of the sea, is unstable in all his ways, is found again in chapter 5, where we read (ver. 16) that "the *effectual fervent* prayer of the righteous man *availeth much.*"

The expression "man of double-soul" is very significant. It puts before us one who is trying to find satisfaction for his soul, now with earthly things, and now with heavenly. It occurs again in the words "purify your hearts, ye *double-minded*"—literally, double-souled (4:8). The love of and desire for earthly things must be purged out, and there must be single-eyed devotion to the Lord, in order that our prayers may be effective.

CHRISTIAN EQUALITY

Verses 9-11 of the first chapter of James bring into view the lesson of *equality among the children of God*, which lesson is very prominent in this Epistle. It is also one of the most prominent of the lessons taught by the Lord Himself in His personal ministry. As is the case with the entire doctrine of Christ, this lesson goes directly counter to the desires of the natural heart. It is the natural aspiration of every man to be great among his fellows, and to surpass all others, in wealth, power, place, or distinction. To compass that object he will bend all his energies, taking advantage of every opportunity whereby to gain a point over his competitors. It is supposed that, if this stimulus to exertion were withdrawn, there would be an end to human enterprise and human progress. Civilization, which is based on competition, would collapse. Yet

the disciple of Christ must die to all such ambitions; and if he would be truly “great” among his fellow saints, he must be the *least* of all and the *servant* of all (Mat. 20: 25-28; Mark 9:35, etc.).

James, therefore, calls upon the brother of low degree to rejoice in that he is exalted; for in Christ he is raised up to a place of perfect equality with all those who, by God’s rich mercy, have been brought into His Kingdom. But the rich is to rejoice in that he is made low. This requires much grace and submissiveness; for it really demands of the rich man that he mortify that very bent of his mind, and that natural aptitude, whereby he was enabled to amass wealth. We know from the Lord’s own words (and our own observations confirm it) that not many who are rich in this world are willing to hearken to the gospel. But some rich men *are* saved (for nothing is impossible with God); and to such is given a *special admonition*. They are reminded that, whatever of advantage, superiority, or distinction their riches may confer upon them, is wholly of the flesh. The rich man, as such, is like the flower of the grass, a thing of but a day, which in the briefest time must wither and perish.

In these simple words, “because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away,” we have one of the *great truths* pertaining to this dispensation—namely, *the complete setting aside of the natural man*, “the flesh,” in which God finds *no good thing*. This truth lies at the very foundation of Christianity; for it is that which creates the necessity for the new birth (mentioned by James in verse 18).

So firmly is this truth of the perishing nature of man in the flesh linked with the gospel, and with the

work of the Holy Spirit, that we find it presented prominently in that part of the prophecy of Isaiah which foretells the message of John the Baptist (Isa. 40:1-8). "The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? *All flesh is grass*, and all the goodliness thereof as the flower of the field The grass withereth, the flower fadeth; but the Word of our God shall stand forever."

God's long trial of humanity in its two great divisions, Jews and Gentiles, brought clearly to light the true condition of all men, as being without exception ready to perish, and hopelessly lost apart from a new-creation work by God Himself.

The Lord repeated this same lesson in instructing Nicodemus concerning the new birth (John 3:6). And Peter also repeats it at length (1 Pet. 1:23-25). Here then is another proof that the Epistle of James belongs to this present dispensation.

When John the Baptist appeared, fulfilling the prophecy we have quoted, and uttering the "Cry" foretold by Isaiah, there were the greatest inequalities among the Jews. Some had amassed enormous wealth; while others, the greater number, were wretchedly poor; and as usual in such cases, the rich assumed a lordly superiority over their poorer brethren. The extent to which this evil had developed—contrary to the teaching of the law—is indicated in chapter 5 of James' Epistle, verses 1-6, from which, and from other Scriptures, such as the incident of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16:19-31, we may learn how grievous a thing in God's eyes are such disparities between men who are equally the debtors, for all they have, to His mercy alone. In fact, the evil referred to was the most prominent of all the great

evils of Judaism; for John's "cry" was directed mainly against it. He was the prophet of a new order of things which was then "at hand," in which every *valley* (or depression) was to be raised up, and every *mountain* and *hill* brought low. Such is the present Kingdom of God, wherein all who enter by Jesus Christ, the only "Door," are on a *perfect equality* in the sight of God.

To this subject James returns in chapter 2; and in chapter 5 he gives a solemn warning to all who set their heart upon riches, and who spend their time in accumulating the wealth of this world. We have here an amplification of our Lord's words: "But woe unto you that are rich! For ye have received your consolation" (Luke 6:24).

CHAPTER IV

TEMPTATIONS OF TWO SORTS. THE FATHER OF LIGHTS. THE NEW BIRTH, AND THE IMPLANTED WORD. HEARERS AND DOERS

Temptations are of two distinct kinds; and it is needful that we distinguish between them. For, if we are to count it all joy when we fall into divers temptations (1:2), and if the man who endures temptation is “blessed” (1:12), why did our Lord teach us to pray: “Lead us not into temptation”? and why did He say to His disciples, “Watch and pray lest ye enter into temptation”?

The explanation is found in the fact that the word “temptations,” in its primary meaning, is broad enough to describe all the trials, hardships, losses, persecutions, reproaches, and the like, which may befall a follower of Jesus Christ in his path of separation and obedience. For the word means primarily to test, or try, or prove, as by the assaying of metal.

But, in a secondary sense, it means also a solicitation *to do evil*. Such a temptation would act *inwardly* upon the heart; whereas those first referred to act *outwardly*. Hence we must distinguish between inward temptations, and those which press upon us outwardly. The Lord Himself had temptations of the latter sort, as He said to His disciples: “Ye are they which have continued with Me in My temptations” (Lu. 22:28). But nothing could tempt Him inwardly; for when He was led of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the Devil, the inducements offered

Him to depart from the will of His Father had no effect on Him; for He could not be tempted *with evil*.

It is of *this sort* of temptation that James now speaks, as is evident from the words, "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted *with evil*, neither tempteth He any man." The words "*tempted with evil*" show what sort of temptations are here intended. God does indeed often tempt His people with afflictions and the like, but never *with evil*.

What then is the true source of temptation which leads men into the commission of sin? It is lust, or desire, *in the heart*. This is one of the Lord's deepest lessons, as He showed when, in His Sermon on the Mount, He presented the Sixth and Seventh Commandments in such a way as to make the thought or desire of the heart to be the spring or seed of the crime (Matt. 5:21, 22, 28). He thus located the guilt within, and made all men equally guilty.

The apostle Paul also declares that the commandment which forbids to lust, or covet, or desire (the Tenth Commandment) was what showed the presence of sin in his own heart, and without which he should not have "*known sin*" (Rom. 7:7, 8), that is to say, he would not have known the true inward nature of sin.

In the verses now before us (James 1:13-15), the development of sin is traced in simple but forceful words, from the inward desire to the outward act and with death as the final consequence (Comp. Rom. 6:23, "*the wages of sin is death*"; and 1 Cor. 15:56, "*the sting of death is sin*").

In these verses we have another instance of the gen-

eral purpose of James to draw attention from that which is merely outward to that which is inward. He exposes the fountain of all temptation and sin, locating it in the breast of every man. This foundation truth concerning the nature of man is calculated to deliver from the deception and pride of Phariseeism, which looked only to the cleansing of the outside of the cup and platter, and made men to be like highly ornate sepulchres, outwardly pleasing to the eye, but inwardly full of corruption. God's truth in the gospel lets the light into the darkness of the human heart, exposing its true condition. And the *saved* sinner has, in that light, a continual reminder of the need of watchfulness and prayer on his own part. He is reminded also of his need of the intercessory work of Christ as the High Priest of the heavenly sanctuary, and of that cleansing through the blood of Christ which is provided for those who confess their sins (1 John 1:9).

James warns his "beloved brethren" not to err in regard to this vital matter, as many do err who delude themselves with a fictitious "holiness," and who, by making nothing of the *inward desire*—sin in the heart—fall into the grave error of the Pharisees. For there are many in our day who hide their own sins from themselves by calling them by other names as "failures," "errors," "mistakes," "shortcomings," &c. But sin is *sin*, by whatever name it may be cloaked, and however carefully it may be hidden out of the sight of men. "The *thought* of foolishness is sin" (Prov. 24:9); and so the same apostle who, more forcibly than any other, denounces sin and demands holiness on the part of God's people, was inspired to write: "If *we* (apostles of Christ) say

that *we* have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. (But) if we *confess our sins*”—for even an apostle had sins to confess—“He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:8, 9). Thus, by the old path of confession to God, and through the exhaustless fountain which He has opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness, we are to purify ourselves from all defilement of the flesh and spirit, and “be holy” in a practical sense. It is in this way that we are to “purify ourselves, even as He is pure” (1 John 3:3).

THE FATHER OF LIGHTS

Having shown that God is not and cannot be the Author of temptation to anyone to do *evil*, James now declares Him to be the Source and Fountain of *all good*, saying, “Every good gift, and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with Whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning” (v. 17).

Nothing that is “good” can spring up from, or be found in, the heart of man. “For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries,” and all the manifold wickednesses which human beings commit (Mat. 14:19). No one can be ignorant as to the corrupt source whence all these evils proceed. But whatever of “good” we have or enjoy is “from above.” A clear realization of this fact, here so simply yet impressively stated, would not only keep us in a state of becoming humility, but would also fill us continually with praise, even when we are enduring “manifold temptations.”

The first of God's gifts, both in the realm of nature and in that of spirit, is *light*. Hence He is beautifully set forth here as "the Father of lights, with Whom is no variableness nor shadow of turning"—that is to say, without fickleness, and without any change in His brightness. As John says, "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5).

That God is the Source of both sorts of light, natural and spiritual, is taught also by Paul, who says: "God Who commanded *the light* to shine out of darkness hath shined in our hearts, to give *the light* of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 4:6). The first "light" in this verse is that of nature, the second is spiritual light, for "that is not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural, and afterwards that which is spiritual" (1 Cor. 15:46).

The Old Testament begins with the entrance of the light of nature by the Word of God, "Let there be light"; and the New Testament begins with the coming of that same "Word," now "made flesh," to be *the true Light*, which lighteth every man, coming into the world (John 1:9).

THE CHILDREN OF LIGHT

It is of Him, "the Father of lights" that we (to whom this Epistle is addressed) are born. For the next words are: "Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth" (v. 18). Thus James, in presenting the great truth of the new birth, combines what is set forth by Peter with what is set forth by John. The former emphasizes that the children of God have been born "by the word of God which liveth and abideth forever," and this, he further explains, is

“the word which *by the gospel* is preached unto you” (1 Pet. 1:23, 25); whereas John emphasizes that they are ‘‘born, not of blood, nor of *the will* of the flesh, nor of *the will* of man, *but of God*’’ (John 1:13).

Thus James connects together *life* and *light*, as coming from God the Father to His own begotten children. This is one of the greatest of truths and the deepest of mysteries. With it we should connect all the admonitions given to ‘‘the children of light’’ (see Matt. 5:14-16; John 12:36; Eph. 5:8-11; 1 Thess. 5:5-8; 1 Pet. 2:9; 1 John 1:5-7, etc.).

James further makes known that we, who have been thus born of God, are to be ‘‘a kind of first-fruits of His creatures.’’ These words bring to view the new creation in Christ Jesus risen from the dead. He Himself is the *absolute* ‘‘Firstfruits’’ (1 Cor. 15:23), as symbolized by the fact that His resurrection took place on the feast of the Firstfruits (Lev. 23:10-12), when the priest, ‘‘on the morrow after the sabbath,’’ was to wave before the Lord the first sheaf of ripened grain brought forth from the ground. This was not only an offering to the Lord, but was also a pledge of the *full harvest* that was to follow. So they who, by grace, share the life of the risen Christ, are (as being associated with Him) ‘‘a kind of firstfruits.’’ Other orders of creatures will share the blessedness of the new creation, but not in this nearness of relationship with Christ.

Paul also, in 1 Corinthians 15:23, shows the relation between ‘‘Christ the Firstfruits’’ and ‘‘they that are Christ’s at His coming.’’ Evidently this is the same truth that is before us in the words of James.

SWIFT TO HEAR: SLOW TO SPEAK

Having shown that God the Father is the Giver of every good and perfect gift, and having referred to the new birth as the greatest of those gifts which come "from above," James now, in verses 19-25, bases thereon certain exhortations which are of the utmost importance. These are introduced by the words "*Wherefore, my beloved brethren,*" which show that they are directly connected with what goes before.

According to the method of God's dealings *in grace*, the relationship into which He brings His people is *bestowed* as a free-gift and the duties *spring out of* the relationship. This is in direct contrast with His dealings under law, wherein the duties were imposed as a *legal obligation*, and the relationship was promised as a reward of faithfulness and obedience (Ex. 19: 5, 6). Here again we have clear proof that James belongs to the era of grace.

Therefore, because we have been begotten of God with the word of truth, we are to be "swift to hear." Under the law it was "If ye will hear My voice indeed." God's way of speaking to us calls for attention and submissiveness to the commandments given for our obedience, so that in keeping them we may glorify our Father in heaven, and secure our present welfare and our future reward. On the other hand, we are to be "slow to speak"; for incalculable mischief is caused by hasty and impulsive speech. To this cause, more than to any other, may be traced the troubles that arise among saints of God. Hence, in this practical Epistle, there is much teaching on the subject of *the tongue*. Words slip out so easily; and

having once passed our lips they cannot be recalled. If there were even a *little* heed paid to this command to be "slow to speak," if only a *little* reflection were to precede our utterances, how *much* evil and strife and hard feelings would be avoided! That this is in the mind of the writer here is evident from the next words, "slow to wrath; for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." Nothing in the way of the righteousness of God can be accomplished by what we attempt to do in heat, or anger, or vexation; and often our efforts to accomplish what was *right in itself* have failed for this reason. "The servant of the Lord *must not strive*, but be gentle to *all* men." Wrath is one of the most diabolical of all the consequences of sin, and nothing serves so well to arouse it as thoughtless words.

At this point we would call attention again to the great *practical* object of James' Epistle, namely, to insist upon that which is *real* and *inward*, in contrast with the religion of the time, which consisted in much *talking* and little *doing*. A diligent and submissive hearing of the Word indicates a humble and teachable spirit, and leads to a full heart and a fruitful life. Whereas one who is always ready to declare his own opinions on every matter is not only showing himself to be vain and proud, but he is also preventing himself from receiving instruction and acquiring true knowledge. "The heart of the righteous *studieth* to answer; but the mouth of the wicked *poureth out* evil things" (Prov. 15:28).

THE IMPLANTED WORD; ABLE TO SAVE THE SOUL

The great and much needed lesson of verse 20 is continued in verse 21: "Wherefore, lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness (or wicked-

ness), and receive with meekness the engrafted (or implanted) Word, which is able to save your souls.' ' It is the Word when received with meekness *into the heart* that exerts a saving influence over the life, or which, as Paul puts it, "effectually worketh also *in* you that believe" (1 Th. 2:13). Here again James insists strongly upon *reality*, demanding that we so receive the Word of God into our inner being, that it becomes an *active working part* of our every day lives. This is a very different thing from merely giving our passive acquiescence to the statements of the Word. One may be a conserver to the truth of all Scripture, and yet not have a bit of it implanted in his heart.

The compelling reason here given for receiving the Word as something planted and growing *within us* is that the Word, when *so* received, is *able to save our souls*. But some will say, I supposed my soul was saved the moment I trusted Christ. The Scripture does not so speak. The Scripture carefully distinguishes between *spirit and soul*, and it is much to be regretted that, in current speech, the word "soul" is commonly used where Scripture uses "heart" or "spirit." The Word of God divides between "soul and spirit" (Heb. 4:12); and it would be well if modern preachers and writers would do the same. The *soul* of the believer will not be "saved" until it is placed forever beyond the temptation and defilement of sin. So long as we are exposed "to fleshly lusts which *war against the soul*," in other words, as long as we are "strangers or pilgrims" on earth, our souls will be in danger of temptation to sin (1 Pet. 2:11), just as our bodies will be in danger from diseases and accidents.

The soul is the *natural life, the personal and conscious being of man*, the seat of his various feelings and experiences of pleasure and pain, joy and sorrow, of his appetites and cravings. Thus the soul of man has much in common with that of other animals. (In fact the word "animal" is derived from *anima*, meaning soul.) But the *spirit* of man is the seat of his *understanding*, whereby he may come into conscious relations with God (1 Cor. 2:11, 12).*

The context makes plain what sort of evils they are from which the Word, when planted within, is able to save our souls; for the writer of the Epistle speaks here of the misuse of the tongue, and of "all manner of filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness," that is, in those things wherein the wickedness of man abounds. It is the every-day-salvation, from temptations of many different sorts, that is here spoken of, salvation from those evil things by which our souls are endangered, as are our bodies by physical accidents and sicknesses. The implanted Word is a protection against the former, and hence in a measure (that is, insofar as sicknesses are the consequences of sins) against the latter also.

But the great purpose for which we are to have the Word implanted in us is that it may shape and control our outward doings. For the next words are: "*But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves*" (v. 22). Here again James insists upon *reality*, and he gives in the next succeeding verses (23 and 24) a strong warning of the danger of deceiving ourselves in this vital matter. For one may listen, and even with respect, to

*See the writer's book, *God's Pilgrims*, chapter on Faith to the Saving of the Soul (Hamilton Bros., publishers).

the Word of God, and may retain much of it in his memory, and yet not manifest any of the fruits thereof. So it is with thousands and millions who attend church services, where the Scriptures are read, and who yet "obey not the gospel." Such are, in a way, worse off, and often are harder to reach, with the truth of salvation, than those who never take part in religious exercises. For if they think they are gaining favor with God, or are deriving benefit from their church-going, they are deceiving their own selves. Self-deception is the worst sort of deception.

So likewise, saints of God may habitually, and from a sense of duty, read or listen to the Word most respectfully; they may profess great admiration for it, may believe in its full inspiration; they may even be learned in the Scriptures, may be able to discourse thereon, and to discuss the teachings thereof most intelligently; they may be able to apply those teachings to others, and yet be "hearers only, not doers," thus deceiving themselves, and thereby incurring present harm and future loss. Here is a matter regarding which we need, one and all, to be thoroughly aroused. The Lord Jesus brings His "Sermon on the Mount" to a tremendous climax in describing what will happen to everyone who heareth *those sayings of His* and *doeth them not* (Matt. 7:26, 27).

James likens the man who is only a hearer of the Word to one who, beholding his natural face in a glass, goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. So is he who merely occupies himself with the Scripture in a superficial way, omitting to make application of it to his own life, even though, while looking into the Word, he may have

seen momentarily, in its clear light, what manner of man he really was, and thus have been made fully aware of his own moral disfigurement.

On the other hand, the believer who looketh into the "perfect law of liberty" and *continueth in it*, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work (i. e., of that which is commanded), this man shall be blessed *in his doing*.

THE PERFECT LAW OF LIBERTY

The title here given to the Word of God claims our special attention. The Holy Spirit, through James, calls it "the perfect law, that of liberty." This title is specially significant because James is here emphasizing the importance of *doing* the things found in the Word; and in this he is following closely the Lord's own teaching given in the Sermon on the Mount. By some in our day the *doing* of the things commanded in the Sermon on the Mount is decried as "legality" and "bondage"; and because of this the commandments of Christ have been virtually cast out of the house, as not belonging to those who are "under grace." But the Holy Spirit here designates the Word (evidently referring in a special way to Christ's own personal teaching which is closely followed in this Epistle)—"the perfect law, that of *liberty*." Let us then cling to that precious "Word" as to a treasure of priceless worth and reject every teaching which would deprive us of it, no matter from what source that teaching may emanate.

The truth of the matter is that the man who would shape his conduct wholly according to the commandments of Christ, so far from being under a "yoke of bondage," would enjoy perfect *liberty*; even as the

Psalmist said: "So shall I keep Thy law continually for ever and ever; and I will walk *at liberty*, for I seek Thy precepts" (Ps. 119:44, 45). And again "O Lord, truly I am Thy servant. . . . Thou hast *loosed my bonds*" (Psa. 116:16). Before one can be the servant of Christ, he must be loosed from every bondage. (See Rom. 6:22.) His service is perfect "liberty."

The Lord Jesus Christ Himself was surely the only Man who ever walked through this world in true liberty and He says of Himself that He kept His Father's commandments (John 15:10). So likewise to His disciples He said, "If ye *continue* in My Word"—(comp. James' words "*and continueth therein*")—"then are ye My disciples indeed, and ye shall know the truth, and the truth *shall make you free*" (Jno. 8:31, 32). Evidently it is while we are *doing* the truth that it makes us free.*

Thus, of the first converts of the gospel it is written, that they "*continued* stedfastly in the apostles' *doctrine*," that is to say, in the doctrine of Christ, which was taught, after His departure, by His apostles, as He had commanded them (Matt. 28:19, 20).

In some such sense we understand the words, "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath *made me free* from the law of sin and death" (Rom. 8:2). A man's course of conduct in this world *must needs* be controlled by some "law." Ordinarily he would be subject to the law of sin and death. But the believer, through keeping the law of the Spirit, or, in other words, through walking in the Spirit, is *made free* from the law of sin and death.

*See comments on Galatians 5:1 in the writer's book, "*Our Liberty in Christ* (Hamilton Bros., publishers).

The “law of Christ” (Gal. 6:2) is “the law of *liberty*” because it can be obeyed only by those whom Christ has *made free* from the bondage of sin and death (John 8:36); and also because it is to be “obeyed *from the heart*” (Rom. 6:17), that is, as a matter of our free choice. For we must *take* His yoke upon us of our own will. He will not *force* it upon any.

CHAPTER V

PURE RELIGION AND THE FAITH OF CHRIST. THE ROYAL LAW AND THE LAW OF LIBERTY

The word “religion” is a very common one in modern usage, but a very uncommon one in the Bible. In the New Testament it is found only in these verses (James 1:26, 27) and in Acts 26:5, where Paul says: “After the most straitest sect of *our religion* I lived a Pharisee.” (The word rendered “Jews’ religion” in Gal. 1:12, 13 is in the original *Judaism*.) Christianity is not called in the Scripture a religion. For religions are systems of *outward observances*, whereas Christianity is essentially a thing of the heart—the *new life of the risen Man Christ Jesus*, imparted by the Holy Spirit to the believer, whose outward acts, so far as they are in keeping with the new nature imparted to him, are not acts of religion, but the *natural expressions of that new life and nature*.

Accordingly, James contrasts the mere outward *seeming* to be religious, with that which is real and inward, and which will specially manifest itself in the bridling of the tongue; and he defines *pure* religion before God and the Father (in contrast with that which *seems* a religious mode of life in the eyes of *men*) as consisting of an outward and *also an inward part*.

The duty of relieving the fatherless and the widows was ever pressed upon the Israelites by their merciful law; and the same duty remains as the unchanging will of Him Who is “the Father of mercies,” as well as “the Father of lights.” God, Who here re-

minds us that He Himself is a “‘Father,’” requires His children to care for the fatherless. But to this is conjoined the inward element, “‘to keep himself *unspotted from the world.*’” It is only in the light of the New Testament, and for the New Testament people, that “‘the world,’” with which they are in daily contact, is made a foreign country and a land of defilement from which they have been delivered by the death of Christ (Gal. 1:4 and 6:14, &c.). The subject of “‘friendship with the world,’” as involving unfaithfulness to God, is referred to in chapter 4:4. This again shows us that in the Epistle of James we are upon New Testament ground.

Chapter 2 takes up the subject of “‘the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ,’” which subject occupies the greater part of the chapter. There is here presented to our minds an instructive contrast with the subject of “‘religion,’” which is found in the verses immediately preceding, which contrast, however, is likely to be missed because of a chapter-break introduced between the two subjects. For we have not to do merely with a religion—not even with “‘pure religion and undefiled’” (were such a thing possible for man);—but we have to do with the vital matter of *faith*, even “‘the faith of the Son of God,’” by which we are to *live* (Gal. 2:20).

There is need to look closely at verse 1 (of James 2) in order to get its sense and meaning. It reads in the A. V. “‘My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of Glory, with respect of persons.’” What James here rebukes is that disposition—very pronounced among the Jews—to show respect to persons of learning or wealth, or social position, or who had some other claim to distinction in the flesh,

and to pay flattering attentions to such, while showing scant courtesy to the poor and humble.

One of the most pronounced features of the Judaism of Christ's time was *Rabbinism*, that is to say, the autocratic power in all doctrinal matters that was exercised by the Rabbis, and the extravagant deference which they exacted, and which was paid to them by the common people. Moreover, it was one of the cardinal points of the religion of the Pharisees (which word means *separated ones*) that personal sanctity was to be attained by avoiding contact with common and ignorant people.

This partiality, or unjust discrimination, is directly opposed to the faith of Christ, at the very foundation of which lies the fact that *all men alike are sinners*, and that none can be saved *but by grace alone*. The sense of the verse, therefore, would be better understood if read thus: "My brethren, in showing respect of persons"—that is in making distinctions where God makes none—"ye have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ."

The making of such differences in behaviour as between the rich and the poor might seem to us a small matter. But in God's eyes it is, as many Scriptures tell us, a great matter. For God has *chosen* the poor of this world (verse 5); and therefore, to discriminate against them, and to despise them, is to despise God's choice. The Lord's own teaching makes constant reference to the fact that the poor have a special claim upon His consideration. His first blessing is pronounced upon the poor in spirit (Matt. 5:3); and in announcing, in another connection, the purposes for which the Father had sent Him into the world, the first item mentioned by Him was "to preach the gos-

pel to the poor" (Lu. 4:18). On the other hand He has declared how *exceedingly difficult* it is for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God (Lu. 24-27). For this reason every rich man who is saved by God's grace and power should be most humbly grateful to find himself among the saved poor, and should be most anxious to seek out for himself the lowest place, refusing to accept any flattering attentions because of his worldly possessions.

The apostle Paul also calls attention to the fact that God has chosen for Himself the foolish things of the world, and the weak things, and base things, and things which are despised, and things which are not; and this He has done with the express object "that *no flesh should glory in His presence*" (1 Cor. 1:26-29). Hence for any to give respect to a man because of some worldly distinction is to deny "the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Here again we see how James insists upon that which is *real* in regard to faith. A man might be perfectly orthodox, holding correct views on every point of doctrine, and yet might deny the faith by his conduct, in *some such* way as instanced in these verses. This lesson is most needful in a day like the present when accuracy in the mere letter of doctrine is made the great thing, and when thousands are resting upon a mere barren and unfruitful orthodoxy.

The importance which God attaches to this matter of showing partiality is made evident also by the repeated statement that God Himself is no respecter of the persons of men. In Deut. 10:17-19 the doctrine is stated with clearness; and it is stated again in 2 Chronicles 19:7. The reading of the context will be found helpful.

This great principle was once more asserted on the occasion of the formal sending of the gospel to Gentiles, when Peter said, "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons" (Acts 10:34).

Paul asserts it also in laying down the solemn truth as to the coming judgment of all men, at which time there will be no preference shown (Rom. 2:11). And again concerning those who had been apostles before himself, Paul brought to mind that God accepts no man's person (Gal. 2:6. See also Eph. 6:9; Col. 3:25; 1 Pet. 1:17).

There is, of course, nothing in these passages that conflicts with other Scriptures which command that due respect and honor be shown to authorities, to elders, to parents, etc. That is not showing respect or partiality to the *persons* thus honored, but to the *positions* in which God has temporarily placed them. It is, in reality, honoring God Himself.

But, on the other hand, diversities and inequalities of condition, which exist in the ordinary relations of human society, are to have *no recognition* among the saved. No deference is to be paid to a man because of his wealth, or superior learning, or greater natural ability. All such disparities are done away, there being a perfect equality among all who are in Christ. Differences of the sort referred to are to serve merely as occasions for the display of that love among brethren which our Lord requires by His "new commandment" (John 13:34, 35). This is also to be the proof that we love Him (John 15:10-12) and the proof that we have passed from death unto life (1 John 3:14).

Of the first converts of the gospel it is recorded that they were so ready to share one with another,

“according as every man had need” (Acts 2:45; 4:35), that there was none among them that lacked. For every man was as prompt to meet another’s need out of his possessions as to meet his own. Thus without any pooling of goods, or anything in the nature of communism, the effect was as if the possessions of all were available for the relief of each, whenever the “need” arose. It was by thus caring lovingly and unselfishly for one another that those first believers “continued stedfastly in the apostles’ teaching.”

Verse 4 is somewhat obscure. The question is asked “Are ye not” (in showing deference to the rich man more than to the poor) “partial among yourselves, and become judges of evil thoughts?” The first clause needs no explanation. The second clause conveys a reproof to those who made themselves “judges,” in the sense of discriminating between rich and poor, and who acted under the influence of “evil thoughts” (*dialogismos*—reasonings, or ratiocinations, or devious mental processes). Tregelles renders it “Those who judge from, or under the influence of, evil thoughts.”

The apostle Paul had occasion to rebuke another form of “respect of persons” which showed itself at Corinth in partiality by some of the saints there for himself, of others for Peter, and of others for Apollos. This personal preference leads to envying, strife, and divisions (1 Cor. 3:3). In fact, neither Paul who planted is to be called “anything,” nor Apollos who watered the growing plants; for each simply put to its proper use what God had given him (v. 7).

In this connection Paul uses the same word *dialogismos* (reasonings or mental processes), quoting

Psalm 94:11, "The Lord knoweth the *thoughts* (or *reasonings*) of the wise that they are vain" (1 Cor. 3:20). And he also, like James, draws a sharp contrast between the true or heavenly wisdom and the wisdom of this world, saying, "If any man among you seemeth to be wise *in this world*, let him become a fool, that he may be (truly) wise" (1 Cor. 3:18).

It is according to the wisdom of this world for each man to look sharply after his own interests, to take every possible advantage of others, and to seek favor with the great and influential. But the wisdom which descendeth from above dictates just the opposite course, namely, that we should seek the welfare of the poor, associate with the lowly (Rom. 12:16), and leave our own interests to the care of our Father in heaven.

The words "Hearken, my beloved brethren" at the beginning of verse 5 (of James 2) are intended to call special attention to the important fact that God hath chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which He hath promised to them that love Him. "But ye have despised the poor." This is exceedingly serious; and it is most needful that those who have custody of possessions to an amount beyond their own necessities should see to it that they neglect not the needs of other saints which they might relieve. God permits that there should be those who are poor in this world's goods among His children, not that they should be slighted or humiliated, or regarded with aversion, but in order that there might be real tests of sincerity, and real manifestations of brotherly love.

Those who are now counted "poor" are in reality *rich* (for the things of faith are the real things), for

they are the "heirs of the kingdom which God has promised to them that love Him." Paul gives expression to the same truth when, after citing the fact that God has chosen the weak and foolish and despised of this world, he goes on to declare that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that *love Him* (1 Cor. 2:9). It is evident that those who turn to God, believing in His Son, are counted as *loving God*. All who believe not are in reality *haters of God*, because they reject His mercy offered now to all men through Jesus Christ, and they despise the great salvation which He accomplished by giving Himself to suffer and die for the sins of men.

James appeals to the fact (which was in those days no doubt a matter of common experience) that rich men were oppressors of others, drawing them before the judgment seats. Nearly all the disputes for which the civil law is invoked are about money; and inasmuch as legal processes are exceedingly costly, the rich man has a great advantage over the poor litigant, whose poverty often prevents him from even disputing the claim that is pressed against him. It is evident, without going beyond this Epistle, that God never purposed that His saints should be dependent for help either upon the lawyers or the doctors of this world.

It is evident that the "rich men," who are here referred to, are men of the world, who characteristically oppress others in their greed of gain, and who blaspheme "that worthy Name" which has been named upon the people of God. Twice in Proverbs it is declared that "He that oppresseth the poor re-

proacheth his Maker; but he that honoureth Him hath mercy on the poor" (Prov. 14:30; 17:5).

Continuing the same subject, James now refers to the written law of the Old Testament, "the Scripture" (for the New Testament was not yet written) as "the *royal* law," saying: "If ye fulfil the royal law according to the Scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well." James here follows the Lord's own summary of the law as recorded in Matthew 22:37-40. He refers, however, only to the second part of the law, which alone is under consideration here—love for one's neighbour.

Again we have in this verse also a very close parallel with Paul's teaching, who says, "He that loveth another hath fulfilled the law." And he, like James, recapitulates the commandments and then says, "And if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Rom. 13:8-10. See also the Lord's exposition of this "royal law" in Luke 10:25-37).

We thus see that the law, in that which is the expression of God's unchanging character—Love—is, and indeed must be, the same for all dispensations; and the essence of it is the *serving of others at our own cost*. If, therefore, we have a spark of that wisdom which is from above, we shall count it a great privilege that we are on earth in a time when there are opportunities for relieving those who, because of poverty, or sickness, or any other affliction, or distress, are in need of succor which it is in our power, if only in a little measure, to extend. Because of these conditions it is possible now to show that divinest of qualities—mercy. The whole lesson of the "Good Samaritan" is expressed in the words "He

that *showed mercy.*” So here in James the climax of the lesson is found in the words “*mercy rejoiceth against judgment*” (v. 13).

The very opposite of this is that grievous sin described by a long Greek word, to which reference has already been made and which is rendered *to have respect of persons*. To this sin Jude, the brother of James, also refers in speaking of those who admire persons for the sake of advantage or profit (Jude 16). If we do that, we commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors. And in this connection James calls attention to the fact that a man is a transgressor if he has offended (literally *stumbled*) even in one point only. For, as shown by Paul in Romans 13, referred to above, the law is a unity, though expressed (for our better comprehension) in diverse commandments. If the law had simply said “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,” *all* the commandments would have been embraced in that one saying.

How happy then are they who are saved by grace through faith in Christ Jesus! For though guilty before God as transgressors of His holy law, they are “not under law” to be judged by it, but have “obtained *mercy*,” having been “justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” The law remains indeed to be kept; but it is to us “the law of *liberty*.” There is no “bondage” in keeping the law to those who are called to live by it, as Jesus Himself lived by it, Who kept His Father’s commandments, and abode in His love. He gives the same rule to us (John 15:10).

James recognizes and points out in his next words, this difference in the relationship which believers in Christ sustain towards the law: “So speak ye, and

so *do*, as they that shall be judged by the *law of liberty*” (v. 12); and he again indicates the essential matter, adding, “For he shall have judgment without mercy that hath *showed no mercy*” (let us call to mind in this connection the case of the rich man who showed no mercy to Lazarus) “and mercy rejoiceth against judgment.”

Our Lord has said, “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy”; and again, “Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again” (Matt. 5:7; 7:1, 2). This is “the law of liberty” by which we shall be judged.

Augustus Neander (the German evangelical historian) commenting on James 2:8-13 says:

“It is assumed that, regardless of all differences in the conduct of men, all are equally guilty in the sight of the law. But, as Christ teaches us to pray ‘Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors,’ even so does James exhort that, by exercising gentleness and mercy, *in the consciousness of still remaining sin*, we should show ourselves meet subjects of the Divine compassion.

“Christians should speak and act with a *continual sense of their own need of God’s mercy*. Then will meekness in speech and manner be its spontaneous expression, and mercy will prevail over strict justice. In this view therefore James calls the law by which the Christian is judged, the law of *liberty*. For he is no longer under the yoke of a law requiring absolute obedience (which none can render) as the condition of salvation; *but* he is connected with a law which is fulfilled in the *free* obedience of love—not

of fear—in the full consciousness of sins forgiven, and in confiding dependence upon the mercy of God."

The statement that believers in Jesus Christ are to be judged by the law of liberty is not, of course, to be taken as meaning that they will be judged as to their salvation, but as to their rewards. For those who belong to Christ will "not come into judgment" (John 5:24).

May we therefore seek and obtain that true wisdom, whereby to value and make full use of our present opportunities in showing mercy and in meting liberally to others of that with which we have been entrusted.

CHAPTER VI

FAITH AND WORKS, TEACHERS AND THE TONGUE

The Epistle of James appears, upon a casual reading, to consist of a series of disjointed instructions; and the change from one topic to another seems, in some cases, quite abrupt. But, upon closer study, it will be seen that there is a connection between the several topics treated. The great subject of *faith* runs all through, beginning with the reference to the *trial of faith* in the first chapter, and extending to the *prayer of faith* in the last.

In our present chapter (2) “the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of Glory” links, as we have seen, with the subject of “pure religion before God the Father”; and it is treated at first by contrast with that sin of showing respect of persons, with which it can have no fellowship. At verse 14, however, the main subject—*faith*—is taken up, in a passage of deepest interest, the writer’s purpose being now to show what “*faith*” *really is*, and to distinguish it from that which is often miscalled by the same name.

We come now to the words: “What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man *say he hath faith*, and have not works? Can faith save him?” A careful reading of the whole passage shows that in it James condemns a so-called “*faith*” which does not manifest the appropriate works of *faith*, just as he had previously condemned the mere *hearing and knowing* of the Word apart from the *doing* of those things which that Word commands.

It should be noted that James does not say or im-

ply that a man who *has* faith would under any circumstances be lost; but that a man who *says* he has it, and *does not manifest it*, would rightly be regarded as destitute of saving faith. For saving faith is a *live* thing; and where it exists in the *heart*, it must appear in the *life*. Whereas to accept a creed—though it be a perfectly orthodox creed—which makes one a mere conserver to the truth of Christianity—is a lifeless thing. So James says plainly that faith, if it hath not works, is *dead* (v. 17).

This is not a different doctrine of faith from that taught by Paul, but is in perfect agreement therewith. Take for example the statement of Gal. 5:6, “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, *but faith which worketh by love.*” Here we have the truth that the only thing which avails for salvation is *faith*; but words are added which show that faith is not merely an attitude of the mind, or the mere acceptance of certain formulas of doctrine, but an *active* thing, manifesting itself in works of loving service to others. Clearly this is the same as saying that faith, so-called, which does not show itself in works, is of no avail for salvation.

The correspondence of the doctrine of James with that of Paul is still more clearly seen in the light of the homely illustration given by the former: “If a brother or sister be naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you *say* unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?” One who had “the faith of the Son of God” would surely be swift, in such a case, to supply the needed things; for true faith worketh by love,

and is eager to manifest itself whenever the opportunity occurs. Hence the conduct of one such as James describes would be clear evidence that his "faith" was but an empty profession.

In view of the fact that *faith* works by *love*, we have an instructive parallel to the doctrine of James, in the words of 1 John 3:16, 17—"And we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoso hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, *how dwelleth the love of God in him?*" Upon comparing these passages, which merit our careful attention, it will be seen that the very conduct which, according to James, would show that a man is devoid of the *faith of Christ*, would show, according to John, that he is devoid of the love of God. From this it follows that where true *faith* is, *love* will be found also; which is just what Paul asserts in Galatians 5:6.

It will be seen also from these Scriptures that *faith* is not a mere acquiescence in the truth of the Bible, nor is *love* a mere sentimental feeling; but that both the one and the other consist in the very practical matter of *doing for others at one's own cost*. And this is the aim and object of *all* the teaching given to the children of God; for when they "walk in love as Christ has loved us" (Eph. 5:2), then they are indeed *like God*; for "God is Love."

The parallel we have been drawing between the teaching of James and that of John can be carried further; for while John says, "Herein is our *love* made perfect," James says, "By works was *faith* made perfect"—meaning, of course, perfect (or complete) as to its *manifestation* and practical purpose.

To illustrate further his meaning, James now sup-

poses the case of a man who takes the same view of faith which he himself takes, and who accordingly addresses one who claims to have faith, saying, "Thou hast faith, and I have works! (indeed!) Show me then thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee *my* faith *by my works*" (v. 18). This makes it quite clear that James insists on "works," *not as being themselves that which justifies a man*, but as being that which "shows" that he really has *faith*. In other words, what James lays stress upon is "works of *faith*"; whereas, when Paul distinguishes between faith and works, he means works of *law*, not works of *faith*.

Both Paul and James refer to Abraham in support of their teaching, which is a further proof of the unity of their doctrine. Paul cites Abraham as the great example of saving faith, whereas James cites what Abraham did as a proof that he really had saving faith.

In this sense it is true as James says that Abraham was justified *by works* when he had offered Isaac on the altar; for he immediately adds, "Seest thou how *faith wrought* with his works," which shows again that *faith* was the effective thing, and that the works merely proved its existence and its genuineness. So likewise in Hebrews 11:17-19 it is declared that the offering of Isaac by his father Abraham was an act of *faith*, he believing that God was able even to raise him up from the dead. Saving faith then consists in trusting in God Who *quickens the dead* (Rom. 4:17, 24; 10:9). Abraham not only *had* this faith, but he also *showed it* by his actions. Paul lays stress upon the fact that he *had* it, while James upon the fact that his works *proved* he had it.

We may therefore sum up briefly the substance of what this important passage teaches, by saying that the "works" whereby a man is justified are works which spring from faith divinely produced in his heart.

THE BELIEF OF DEMONS

James also, in the passage now before us, illustrates his lesson concerning faith by appealing to the fact that even the demons (or evil spirits) believe and tremble (i. e., *shudder*—not the same word as "trembling" in Phil. 2:12; 1 Cor. 2:3, etc.). This at once exposes the ineffectiveness of a mere passive "belief." The very same facts, which cause the demons to shudder with dismay, cause the truly repentant and believing sinner to "rejoice with trembling." And why? Because the Word of God reveals mercy for sinners, but none for demons. It is impossible for demons to do works of faith; for there is no *saving* faith for them, there being no promise of God on which they could rest, though they might pass every test for the strictest orthodoxy. If, therefore, orthodoxy could save, the demons would be saved. They were quick to recognize and to acknowledge the Lord when He was among men. They even prayed to Him, and had their prayer granted (Matt. 8:31, 32).

By consideration of the fact that even the demons believe, we can learn that real Bible "faith" involves not only the acceptance as true of what the Bible reveals concerning God and Christ, and ourselves (for the demons do all that) but also the *living of a life with reference to God and His revealed truth*, a life which is altogether different from, and often *directly*

contrary to, the course of conduct we pursued when unsaved (Eph. 2:1-3). To quote again from Neander:

“Faith in God, in its true sense, can only exist where He is consciously recognized as the highest good, and where the *whole life* has reference to Him. That is true ‘faith’ which includes in itself a living fellowship with God—a practical, not merely an intellectual faith.”

Finally, in the passage before us, we are referred to the faith of Rahab; it being fitting that an example should be given to show that the same faith avails *Gentiles* as well as Jews—and always did. There were others, perhaps many in Jericho, who “believed” what Rahab believed. But she also *acted* upon her belief, first in asking that she and her father’s house be saved alive, then in protecting the messengers, and finally in displaying for her protection the scarlet cord, as they directed her. As in the case of Abraham, Rahab’s “works” were directly contrary to what she would have done naturally. And thus true faith ever manifests itself.

Summing up all his teaching and examples James says that, “as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.” This comparison is not, of course, intended to suggest that faith resembles a human body while works resemble the spirit which animates that body; for the spirit in fact is hidden, even as faith, in itself, is unseen. But the point of the comparison lies in this, that *life* is, like *faith*, a thing which we cannot “show” in itself. By the actions of the body, however, the life within it is manifested, and without those actions of the spirit the body is, to all appearance, dead. So faith is shown

to exist only by those special "works" which spring from a true faith in the living God.

TEACHERS AND THE TONGUE (3:1-12)

Chapter 3 begins with an admonition which at first glance appears a strange one: "My brethren, be not many masters (teachers), knowing that we shall receive the greater judgment." (The word is *judgment* —not *condemnation* as in Rom. 8:2; for there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.)

This verse brings us to a very important matter, namely, to what "the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ" teaches concerning the use of the tongue. For James is not, as might at first appear, taking up here a new subject, but is in reality continuing the same line of teaching as in the preceding chapter. This appears in that he now rebukes an evil which had grown naturally out of that view of the law which had long prevailed among the Jews. For they had come to regard the mere *having* of the law as a ground for boasting. They "rested" in it with proud satisfaction (Rom. 2:17). They were, however, indifferent as to *obeying* it, deeming it quite enough to know it in the letter, and to hold discourses about it (Rom. 2:19-23). Such ideas would inevitably lead many to assume the role of "teachers," deeming themselves to be guides of the blind (though in reality but "blind leaders of the blind"), lights to them which are in darkness, instructors of the foolish, and teachers of babes. To such Paul also refers in 1 Timothy 1:6, 7, as having turned aside unto vain jangling, desiring to be teachers of law, but in reality understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm. And this is not a reflection on the law, for he hastens to add: "But we

know that the law is good if a man use it lawfully."

As a check to this tendency James now brings to mind the fact that those who assume to instruct others regarding their behavior, *incur for themselves a greater responsibility*, and will be held to a more strict account.

This lesson is greatly needed in our day, wherein a superficial acquaintance with the letter of Scripture, when combined with ability to give addresses on Bible-themes, is supposed to make one a "teacher." It is all but forgotten that "teaching" means to apply the Words and Commandments of the Lord to the *hearts and consciences* of His people, in such manner as to cause them continually to examine and amend their ways, and to shape their daily lives and conduct in conformity with the revealed will of God. It is much to be feared that many of our "teachers" never in reality *teach* at all; and that many of God's people rarely, if ever, have the benefit of any real "teaching."

Very often the people of God, instead of receiving teaching concerning the will of God and the manner of life which should characterize His people, have to listen to addresses on Bible topics, discussions of dispensational theories, and the like. The homely, practical commandments of the Lord and His apostles, which are addressed to old and young, to men and women, to husbands and wives, to parents and children, to masters and servants, receive scant attention, or none at all.

Human infirmity is such that those who take upon themselves to teach others how they ought to walk and please God are very liable to offend (*i. e.*—stumble). Indeed James says, "We all often stumble."

(This is the correct reading of verse 2.) And particularly those who undertake to teach are liable to “stumble *in word*”; insomuch that James says, “if any man stumble not in word, the same is a perfect man, and is able to bridle the whole body” (v. 3).

Thus we are led into a subject of vast importance—that of *the tongue*. We are prone to forget that the activities of that little member are as much *actions* (for which we must give account) as are the things done with the hands; and that the former is as much a member of the body as the latter. But the Lord has said that out of the abundance of heart (what the heart is full of) the mouth speaketh; and that “every idle word that men speak they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment” (Matt. 12:34-37). The Lord has spoken it, and it surely will come to pass. Hence, when Paul says that we shall all be manifested before the judgment seat of Christ, that *every one* may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad, we are to understand that “the things done in the body” include *all the words we have spoken* (2 Cor. 5:10).

A WORLD OF INIQUITY

In fact the tongue, though “a little member” (v. 5), is far the most active of all, and hence capable of doing the greatest amount of good or evil; and since man is a fallen creature, whose purposes and aims are all opposed to the will of God, the tongue (which here stands for the power of utterance of either spoken or written words) has been one of the greatest of all agencies for the working of iniquity. James calls it “fire, a world of iniquity.”

For not only is the tongue able, by means of harsh words, or foul words, or lying words, or blasphemous words, to inflict direct injury upon others, but the words of one man may have the effect of setting thousands of other men into action; or may implant ideas in their minds, or awaken feelings in their hearts, which will lead to far-reaching consequences.

One of the most striking developments of the past fifty years is *the amazing increase of agencies for multiplying and communicating words*. These include the rotary power-printing press, whereby a whole forest of trees can be used up in one Sunday edition of a metropolitan newspaper; the various writing machines, multigraphing machines; talking machines; photo-engraving processes; type-setting machines; telegraphs and telephones; in addition to a highly developed international postal service; and latest of all, the "radio" whereby the marvellous agency of high electrical vibrations is utilized, on the recently perfected principles of wireless telegraphy, to bring from many broadcasting stations, speeches, music, and other sounds, into the homes of the people. How few give any thought to the fact that all these facilities for *multiplying words* serve to increase enormously the sins for which men must answer! Or to the fact that these word-multiplying and word-distributing agencies are contributing powerfully toward bringing human civilization to its final climax! But thus the tongue, besides being itself the most active of all the members, has such instrumentalities at its command that it can reach out and function, so to speak, instantly at the very ends of the earth. How true then that the "little member boasteth great things!"

James gives several simple but striking illustrations of the power that often resides in some small thing to accomplish great results. He likens the tongue, in this respect, to the bit, which, though small in size, is effective to control so strong a creature as a horse, and also to a rudder which, though likewise of small size, serves to guide the great vessel at the will of the steersman, even when driven by fierce winds. But he passes on to a stronger figure of speech, likening the tongue to a *fire*!

With the foregoing facts in view James exclaims, “Behold, how great a matter (lit. how great a *wood*) a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is *fire*, a world of iniquity. Thus the tongue is set among our members, so that it defileth the whole body, and setteth *on fire* the course of nature, and is set *on fire* of hell” (vv. 5, 6).

The first thought here expressed is that as a very small fire can kindle a great forest into flame, so the little member may be the cause of a great conflagration. Fire *communicates itself*, and so spreads far and wide where there is material upon which it can act; and precisely so with the tongue. Its scope is so wide that James calls it a *world* of iniquity. Being set among the other members it is the defiler of the whole body; for it has the heart, that sink of corruption, to draw from, and needs not to seek its defiling material from without. It sets on fire the very course of nature—for the incendiary ideas now spreading in every direction are communicated *by means of words*. The word rendered “course” is literally the “wheel” or “circuit” of nature, embracing the entire ambit of human affairs. And finally, the tongue itself is set on fire of *hell*. For the tongue of man, in all its

diversified activities, is actuated not from above, but from beneath.

Thus the passage we are considering gives a clear indication that it is through the tongue, that is, through human speech and language, that the counsels of hell for the destruction of mankind will be carried out. It is well known that the propaganda of Bolshevism and other hell-born doctrines of destruction are at this very time being carried on in our midst. But no one knows how to avert the danger. "Little children, it is the last hour."

THE UNCONTROLLABLE MEMBER

Another characteristic of the tongue of man is now referred to, namely, the impossibility of *subduing* or *taming* it. This characteristic is emphasized by the fact that every species, both of beast and bird, and even serpents and creatures that live in the sea, have been tamed and brought into subjection by men; but his own tongue, can no man subdue and control (3:7). For it is an unruly evil, not to be restrained by human power alone. There is peculiar force in this verse if we take the words in the order in which they are found in the original text, which would yield this sense: "But the tongue no one is able of men to subdue"; that is to say, no man unaided can do it. This leaves room for the inference that, by the Spirit's power, it can be done.

The tongue is full of poison, bringing death. With the same member bless we God, even the Father, and curse we men, which are made after the likeness of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing (vv. 9, 10).

We take it that the last statement is intended merely

ly to set forth in a striking way the extreme possibilities, for good and evil, whereof the tongue (considered abstractly) is capable.

How contrary this is to the mind of God, and to the purposes for which He endowed mankind with the marvellous faculty of speech, is now illustrated by the questions, "Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter? Can the fig-tree bear olive-berries? Or the vine figs?" (vv. 11, 12). What awful corruption then has sin wrought in man that one of his most godlike faculties should be thus perverted from its intended uses! It is as great an anomaly as if a fountain should yield both salt water and sweet.

Marvellous indeed is the power given to mankind of communicating with one another by means of words. All human affairs depend upon it, and human institutions would fall into ruins were that power taken away from men. And because it is a faculty so wonderful, it is capable of infinite mischief when wrongly used. Its highest use is in proclaiming the gospel of God and making Christ known. The spread of the gospel, and hence the salvation of men, and the accomplishment of all the purposes of God, depend wholly upon the use of *words*—words whereby perish-
ing sinners may be saved. Hence the sacredness of language, and the importance of using it aright; and hence the reason why, for every word spoken amiss, men will be brought to account.

CHAPTER VII

WISDOM FROM ABOVE

This brings us to a passage of singular beauty and power, in which our teacher puts before us the qualities of that Wisdom which is from above, and which has visited this world in the Person of Jesus Christ, Who is “the Wisdom of God.” The passage is worthy to be compared with Paul’s description of Love in 1 Corinthians 13.

From the particular subject of the use of the tongue it was easy to pass to that of “good conversation” (*i. e.*, behaviour) in general. So James is prompted at this point to ask, “Who is a wise man, and endued with knowledge among you? Let him show out of a *good conversation* his works with meekness of wisdom” (3:13).

The word “conversation” has now no longer the meaning it had when the Bible was translated into English, three centuries ago. It then meant one’s course of conduct, behaviour, or manner of life. So we must give it that meaning here and elsewhere, as in Eph. 2:3; Phil. 1:27; Heb. 13:5; 1 Pet. 1:15; 3:1, 2, etc.

We note here again that James characteristically demands that wisdom be *shown*, and that it be shown *not by learned talk*, but by such a *manner of life* as true wisdom dictates. This again is directly in contrast with the ideas prevailing among both Jews and Gentiles at that time—and, we might add, until now, For those who are reputed “wise” are either men of scholarly attainments, well versed in the lore of the

ancients, and capable of discussing speculative themes in a manner beyond the comprehension of common folk; or else they are the clever men who know how to take advantage of every opportunity for adding to their wealth, or for bettering their position in this world. But to what end does *this* wisdom conduct those who possess and are guided by it? To certain, complete and eternal loss and disaster. For “Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world?”—the man who disputes even the Word of God (1 Cor. 1:20)? Where is he and what becomes of his wisdom in the day of reckoning? See him put to eternal shame, and his boasted wisdom, which brought him flattery, distinction and wealth “in this age,” made a thing of everlasting contempt! For “the wise men are put to shame, they are dismayed and taken: lo, they have *rejected the word of the Lord*; and *what wisdom* is in them?” (Jer. 8:9).

“The fear of the Lord,” which leads a man to pay heed to the Word of the Lord, is the very “beginning of (true) wisdom” (Prov. 9:10); and the *rejection* of the Word of the Lord is therefore the height of all folly.

But James calls upon us not only to possess the true wisdom (by asking for it in faith of God Who gives liberally), but also to *show* that we truly have it. This is in accordance with his previous demand that we *show* our faith by the appropriate *works* of faith. This lesson should lead us then first to seek, by earnest and believing prayer, for that wisdom which comes only from above, and as a “good and perfect gift” from “the Father of lights”; and second to study very carefully the nature of *this* wisdom, and the

“works” whereby it is manifested. The passage now before us furnishes precious materials for the purposes of such a study. Let us turn to it with the sincere desire for *reality in our lives*.

The first quality of heavenly wisdom which is singled out for notice is its *meekness*—a quality whereof no man has the least trace by nature. Meekness is not a trait of character which advances a man in this world and helps him to gain its prizes. These are won by the forceful and aggressive. So here is a very marked contrast between the wisdom that is from above and the wisdom of the natural man.

The Lord’s words also put meekness in the foreground of the things to be learned of Him; for He says “Learn of Me, *for I am meek and lowly in heart*” (Matt. 11:29).

Meekness accepts without anger or protest all injustice and unkindness, all slights and indignities; is never affronted; never complains of ill treatment, or fancies itself overlooked or aggrieved. In order to help us understand what is meant by “meekness of wisdom” reference is made to the opposite. “But if ye have bitter *envying* and *strife* in your heart, glory not and lie not against the truth.” (The word “against” should be repeated, making the last clause read “boast not *against*, and lie not *against*, the truth.”)

The presence of envying and strife in a man’s heart is an evidence that he is not acting in the wisdom that God bestows, but in that which is from another source. Such an one is warned that he should not (by assuming to have the gift of heavenly wisdom) boast himself against the truth, or lie against it.

Likewise Paul’s first practical lesson, to those to

whom he had imparted the knowledge of their position in Christ Jesus in the heavenly places, was that they should walk worthy of their vocation "in all lowliness and meekness" (Eph. 4:1, 2).

Proceeding now to speak of the wisdom of the natural man which is compatible with envying and strife in the heart, James says: "*This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish*" (v. 15).

One who has the meekness of true wisdom will not envy another, for where the wisdom that is from above presides in the heart, there will be no "bitter envying and strife." Envy arouses bitterness within, and causes strife without. "*Envy is rottenness of the bones*" (Prov. 14:13). It is one of the very worst traits of corrupt human nature. It moved the brethren of Joseph to sell him into Egypt (Acts 7:9), and the leaders of the Jews to deliver Christ to Pilate (Matt. 27:8). It is one of the most hateful results of sin. When we find ourselves envying another the possession and enjoyment of anything whatever, let us seek grace to overcome, until we can even take pleasure in his having it.

The wisdom which goes along with envy and strife has three characteristics that are here named.

First, it is "*earthly*"; for the wisdom that is from above has no trace of envy, and takes no part in strife, but is "*peaceable*" (see v. 17).

Second, it is "*sensual*." This is a word derived from *soul*, for which there is no exact equivalent in English. It is used in Scripture in contrast with *spiritual*. It might be rendered *psychical*, or *soulical*. Thus in 1 Cor. 2:14, 15, we read of the "*natural man*" (man of soul) and the "*spiritual man*" (man of spir-

it). The same contrast runs through verses 44-46 of 1 Cor. 15: "It is sown a *natural* body (a body suited to man who lives for the pleasure of the soul), it is raised a *spiritual* body," etc. "And so it is written. The first man Adam was made a living *soul*; the last Adam a Quickening *Spirit*."

This distinction between soul and spirit must be noted if we would understand certain passages of Scripture; but, as already stated, it is generally overlooked at the present day.

Third, the wisdom that is here spoken of—that of the natural man—is "devilish," or more properly *demonic*. There is but one Devil, but many demons, or evil spirits; and as the word in 2:19 should be demons, not devils, so here it is *demonic*, not *devilish*. It is the worst thing that is said of the wisdom of man that it has the same character as that of demons. It is to be expected that between fallen spirits and fallen men there would be many things in common; and so it is. For that reason the fallen spirits seek to occupy the bodies of human beings. Wisdom in fallen beings busies itself with ways and means for securing satisfaction *apart from God*. But since the pursuit of satisfaction apart from God brings those who are thus occupied into collision with others, they are continually in a state of envy and strife, and this gives birth to every evil work.

Speaking of envy, Wm. Law says:

"When at any time you find in your heart motions of envy towards any person, whether on account of his riches, power, learning, reputation, or advancement, if you should immediately betake yourself at that time to your prayers, and pray to God to bless and prosper him *in that very thing which raised your envy*; if you should express and repeat your petitions

in the strongest terms, beseeching God to grant him all the happiness from it that can possibly be received, you would soon find it to be the best antidote in the world to expel the venom of that poisonous passion."

We come now to the passage already referred to, in which we cannot fail to recognize a description by the Holy Spirit of Christ Himself, Who is "the Wisdom of God" as well as "the Power of God," and "Who of God is made unto us Wisdom" (1 Cor. 1:24, 30). This is the passage:

"But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peacable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy."

This divine and heavenly wisdom is first of all (like everything that comes from heaven) *pure*. There is a word of frequent occurrence in the New Testament and which is rendered *pure*, or *clean*, or *purged*. But that word signifies ordinarily a thing which has been *made* pure, or cleansed, or purged. It is the word that is used in passages which contain such expressions as "with a pure conscience," "out of a pure heart," "pure religion," "purifying their hearts by faith," etc. (1 Tim. 1:5; 3:9; Jas. 1:27; Acts 15:9).

But another word is used here, a word derived from that which means "holy." It is applied to Christ in 1 John 3:3—"even as He is *pure*." Hence it is more properly applied to that which is *innately* pure. It could apply only to one who had no need of purification.

The wisdom that is from above is "pure" also in the sense that it is quite unmixed with, and undefiled by, earthly elements. It is like the light, which

touches the vilest things, yet remains itself unsullied. Thus it was with our Blessed Lord in His contact with the defiled things of earth. He could touch the leper, or the dead man's bier, or take the dead girl by the hand, and not be defiled Himself. He was not only "holy" and "harmless," but also "*undefiled*" (Heb. 7:26).

Furthermore, the wisdom that is from above has no ends of its own to gain. It is "pure" from all selfish purposes, seeking only the glory of God.

This wisdom is "*then peaceable*." Thus in contrast with envying it is *pure*; and in contrast with strife it is *peaceable*. Its very business is to bid the winds of discord cease, the waves of strife be still; to reconcile the enemies of God, and to pacify the warring elements of the world. Having no interests of self to gain, it provokes only "to love and to good works." When Jesus was born the messengers from heaven announced "peace on earth"; and when He departed from His disciples He said, "Peace I leave with you." Moreover "*He is our peace*"; for He reconciled us unto God by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby (Eph. 2:14, 16); and through Him, being justified by faith, we have *peace with God* (Rom. 5:1).

This wisdom is next described as *gentle* and *easy to be entreated*. Heavenly wisdom uses no violence; and needs none to attain its ends. Every purpose that it seeks is attained through gentleness. Paul beseeches us "*by the meekness and gentleness of Christ*." "*The fruit of the Spirit is . . gentleness*."

It is *easy to be entreated*; for it is always ready to respond to every cry of need or request for help. If it were but the servant of a despised Gentile for whom

the Lord's help was sought, His immediate response was, "I will come and heal him" (Mat. 8:7).

This wisdom, moreover, is *full of mercy* and *good fruits*. Mercy is one of the most divine of divine things; and Christ is full of it, and of all good fruits. How well suited is He to the needs of a world like this!

Furthermore, it is *without partiality* and *without hypocrisy*. We have seen the importance given in this Epistle to the common evil of showing respect of persons. One who is actuated by heavenly wisdom shows no preferences. He is as ready to serve the poor and lowly as the rich and great. It made no difference to the Lord what was the social position of one who sought His help. If on the way to heal the daughter of a ruler of the synagogue, He could stop to deal with the case of a poor nameless woman in the crowd.

It is also "without hypocrisy." It has nothing to conceal, and hence is perfectly transparent. But not so with earthly or natural wisdom, which, for the attainment of its ends, relies much upon concealment, astuteness, cunning and craftiness, masking its aims, and resorting to every device to baffle those whose interests are opposed.

This brings us to the last verse of the chapter (James 3) which reads: "*And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace*" (v. 18).

Thus the final emphasis of the passage is laid upon *peace, and peace-making*. As we have already said, our Lord's work was, in a very special sense, the making of peace, or, to use the familiar Bible word, the making of reconciliation. But "peace" in the Bible

sense means far more than merely a period of relative tranquility, a season of cessation of war. It means a condition of happiness and prosperity, a condition of the enjoyment of every blessing and every pleasure which makes for the welfare of the individual and of society. And inasmuch as man's peace with God was broken by sin, and all the countless miseries of man resulted therefrom, the making of "peace," in the fullest sense, means nothing less than the complete abolition of sin, and of all its consequences.

Not only was the work of Christ one of making peace, or of reconciliation, but the work also which He has committed to His servants is largely a "ministry of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5:18-21). This ministry is to be performed by preaching the gospel and teaching the commandments of Christ (Mat. 28:19, 20; Acts 28:31). For the wisdom of God, as embodied in the doctrine of Christ broadly, and specially in the Sermon on the Mount, abolishes all envying, strife and antagonisms, just so far as men submit themselves to it.

But their submission must be rendered *voluntarily*; for inasmuch as the Kingdom of God is characterized in this present dispensation by *grace*, God does not *compel* any to keep His commandments, nor does He enforce them by present pains and penalties.

By "the fruit of righteousness" we understand that which *results from*, and is the product of, the true righteousness of God, imparted through the gospel to repentant and believing sinners; for the first fruit of righteousness mentioned by Paul is *peace*, as it is written, "Being *justified* by faith we have *peace* with God" (Rom. 5:1). This too is that characteristic of the Kingdom of God which is mentioned next

after righteousness, for that Kingdom is declared to be “righteousness, and *peace*, and joy in the Holy Ghost” (Rom. 14:17).

To the same effect Isaiah prophesied, saying: “Behold, a King shall reign *in righteousness*, and princes shall rule in judgment” (Isa. 32:1). And he goes on to tell what should be “until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest. *Then* judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and *righteousness* in the fruitful field. And the work of righteousness shall be *peace*, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance forever” (vv. 15-17). Such is the Kingdom of God, which began with the pouring out of the Spirit from on high, and which is defined by Paul as “righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.”

The words “of them that make peace” are capable of being read “*for* them that make peace,” and this we take to be the correct reading. For our Lord said, “Blessed are the peacemakers,” and it is in keeping with His promise to expect that they will be “blessed” in the enjoyment of all “the fruit of righteousness.”

Solomon also says that “to him that *soweth righteousness* shall be a *sure reward*” (Prov. 11:18); and Hosea (who has much to say about the harvest of God) exhorts the people in these stirring words: “Sow to (or for) yourselves *in righteousness*, reap *in mercy*; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the Lord, till He come and *rain righteousness upon you*” (Hos. 10:12).

Now is the seed time. But it passes quickly. Soon the harvest-time will be upon us; and what will the

harvest be? Solemn question this in view of the sure word of God that “whatsoever a man soweth *that* shall he also reap” (Gal. 6:7). This is the ground of the last and the strongest appeal which the Scripture makes for *reality in our lives and conduct*. For our actions are as seeds, which are cast into the ground, and utterly lost sight of—perhaps forgotten. But they will spring up and yield their appropriate “fruit” in the harvest season. Let us then sow to the Spirit, and sow in righteousness; “and let us not be weary in *well doing*; for in due season we shall *reap* if we faint not” (Gal. 6:8, 9).

CHAPTER VIII

WARS AND FIGHTINGS. FRIENDSHIP WITH THE WORLD. CONFLICT WITH THE DEVIL. EVIL SPEAKING. THE UNCERTAINTY OF LIFE

From the topic of righteousness and peace, with which the third chapter of James closes, our teacher turns, at the beginning of chapter 4, to wars and fightings, asking, “From whence come wars and fightings among you?” Thus we have another instructive contrast; and it is doubtless for the sake of that contrast that the subject of wars and fightings is taken up at this point, though there is also a connection between this subject and that of envying and strife in chapter 3, verse 16.

This turn of thought leads James to refer to kindred evils also. Wars and fightings he traces to the lusts of the flesh. So, by a natural association of ideas, he speaks next of friendship with the world (v. 4), and then of conflict with the Devil (v. 7). Thus our three great enemies are brought before us in turn—the flesh, the world, and the Devil.

James’ purpose apparently is to show that strivings and contentions of all sorts, whether physical or moral, proceed from lusts or desires which spring up in the heart. Thus our attention is again called from the outward manifestations to the *inward cause*.

The teaching of Judaism, as of all other systems of religion, concerned itself only with what is outward. From all these systems the doctrine of Christ differs in that, while not disregarding that which is outward, it insists upon the correction first of all of that which

is within, and requires that the outward conduct should be the fruit of a *renewed mind* and a *purged heart*. Our Lord stated it thus: “Cleanse *first* that which is *within* the cup and platter, *that* the outside of them may be *clean also*” (Matt. 23:26).

Paul, in the 7th of Romans, vividly pictures a continued struggle within a man, having previously shown that the essence and hidden sources of sinful acts are the lustings or covetings of the heart (Rom. 7:7). It matters not whether we regard the struggles which Paul there describes as being those of a converted man, or those of an unconverted man. In either case it is the struggle of a law in one’s members *warring against* the law of the mind (v. 23).

Again, in Galatians 5:17, Paul pictures a similar struggle, which in this case is a war between the “flesh,” or old nature in the believer, and the Spirit. This is more nearly parallel to the passage in James 4, as will be seen upon noticing the words in verse 5, “The Spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy.” Deferring for the present our comments on this verse, we would only remark that we follow the Revised Version in spelling “Spirit” with a capital letter, being convinced that it refers to the Holy Spirit.

For the reasons already indicated we take it that James is not speaking specifically of physical wars and fightings (though these would be included as springing from the same cause), but of conflicts in general; and particularly of struggles and conflicts such as occur in a man himself. In this connection we would point out that the preposition rendered “among” is *en*, most commonly rendered *in*; so that the verse might properly be read “From whence come wars and fightings *in* you.”

In chapter 1, where lust or desire is named as the cause of sin, the sequence is traced from the inward to the outward. Likewise here it is shown that fighting, warring and killing all spring from the same root.

The language used appears almost too strong to be applied to renewed men; and of course the words would be applicable in their fullest meaning only to the unsaved. But if we bear in mind that James is here speaking of *the flesh* (as opposed to the Spirit), and that the flesh in the believer is no whit better than that in the unbeliever, it will be recognized that the language is not a bit too strong where the flesh is uppermost, and its incorrigible nature is unrestrained.

Paul, in Galatians 5, enumerates the works of the flesh and among them is "murder." So James likewise says, "Ye kill." Luther, wishing to tone this down, translated it "Ye hate." But there is no warrant for weakening the language, and no need. The Lord has shown that to be angry with one's brother merits the judgment which the law decreed against the slayer; for anger is murder in its incipient stage; and John plainly says, "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer" (1 John 3:15).

The Scriptures cited in the last preceding paragraph convey precisely the same lesson as James 4:1, 2; and they confront us with the humbling fact that we, one and all, owe our escape from the *deed* and the *doom* of the murderer, not to any improvement in our old man, or to the fact that the flesh in us is any whit better than that in the homicide—for there is in fact "no difference"—but *wholly and solely* to the restraining power of the Spirit *in us*, and to

the merits of our Lord's intercession *for us* in the heavenly sanctuary.

FRIENDSHIP WITH THE WORLD

Another point touched upon in these verses is failure in prayer and misuse of prayer. Some try to obtain the objects of their desires and cannot. So they "fight and war," and they have not *because they ask not*. Here is failure through *neglect* of prayer, leading on to an attempt to attain one's desires by force. But in the next verse we read of those who *do* ask, and yet receive not, because they ask amiss, that they may consume it upon their desires. Here is a fact which accounts for many unanswered prayers.

Verse 4 shows what sort of desires or "lusts" are meant, namely, *worldly* lusts, as in 1 Pet. 2:11. In that verse (Jam. 4:4) the words "adulterers and" should be omitted, so that it will read "Ye adulteresses, know ye not that friendship with the world is enmity with God?"

God regards His people as being so peculiarly His that He has the same claim upon their undivided affections and upon their loyalty, that a loving and devoted husband has upon the affections and loyalty of his wife. (See Isa. 50: 1; Jer. 2:2; 31:32; Ezek. Chap. 23; 2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:25-27, etc.) Hence, to bestow, in any other quarter, that love and confidence which God claims wholly for Himself, or to seek in other quarters for that which a fond husband delights to bestow, is in His eyes spiritual adultery.

In what way then, and with whom, may God's people now commit adultery? The foregoing Scriptures answer this question fully. But how many are ready to receive the answer? The tempter of God's people

is "the world"—that great institution which offers to supply every need of man and every satisfaction which his heart demands—"the world," with its religions and ethical systems, its remedies for sin and sickness, its art and music and literature, its education and sciences, its entertainments and amusements, its philosophies and philanthropies, its sports and pastimes—and at the end perhaps a funeral oration and polished marble shaft; but "after this, *the judgment*!"

So long as the redeemed people were in *the wilderness*, God was everything to them. He was the Supplier of their daily food, the Protector from all their enemies, their only Guide in the way they went, their Sun and Shield, and the only Healer of their diseases. He was everything to them because they were *in a wilderness*, and there was none other for them to turn to. But when they had opportunity, they cast longing looks upon the Assyrians and Babylonians, and Chaldeans—"all of them desirable young men, captains and rulers, great lords and renowned, all of them riding upon horses" (Ezek. 23:23, etc.); and they "doted upon them," and sought friendly relations with them, and accepted help and favors from them.

And how did God deal with them because of this? He simply *delivered them into the hands of their lovers* (Ezek. 23:9, etc.).

These things happened unto them for "types," and are written for our admonition (1 Cor. 10:11);—not indeed that we should *do* the same things, but that we should *avoid* them. We should give careful heed also to the word whereby the Lord reproached His people through Hosea, taxing them likewise with spir-

itual unfaithfulness. Thus we read: "When Ephraim saw his sickness and Judah saw his wound, then went Ephraim to the Assyrian, and sent to king Jareb; yet could he not heal you, nor cure you of your wound" (Hos. 5:13). "Ephraim also is like a silly dove without heart; they call to Egypt; they go to Assyria" (Hos. 7:11).

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. Only the Lord can know it. We may be outwardly quite correct in our attitude towards Him, and quite correct in our behaviour, and yet our affections be far from Him and our confidence in Assyria and Egypt. A visitation of illness may reveal even to ourselves the real state of our hearts. What do we at such a time? Do we instinctively seek unto the Lord to know His purpose and to entreat for His deliverance? Or do we, like King Asa and like the godless people of the world, seek not unto the Lord but unto the physicians? May He in mercy preserve us from that easiest of all snares—self-deception.

"Friendship with the world" then is spiritual adultery, which arouses the consuming *jealousy* of God's love for His people; and it is, moreover, "enmity against God."

Thus, just as in the Sermon on the Mount the Lord passes from the sin of murder to that of adultery, so James here follows the same order; and he reveals the sin as it is found, not in the physical realm, but in the moral and spiritual.

To seek then to "the world" for either the satisfactions of the heart, or for deliverance from enemies—in one word for "salvation" from either sin or sickness—is to commit against God the same offence that a wife commits when she goes aside from her

own loving husband, and seeks from others her pleasure or her relief and help in time of need.

Is the world to us truly "a wilderness wide"? Or do we deceive ourselves when we sing such words? If it *be* a wilderness to us, then it must be such *by our own choice*. We must have the strength of faith in our divine "Husband" to put aside the friendly outstretched hands of the world, and to trust in Him alone for everything He has pledged Himself to be to His people.

Here again, as in other parts of his Epistle, James shows that the fault is inward; and hence that the fault must be corrected at its source, if it is to be cured at all. For he says, "Whosoever therefore will be"—that is, has the wish or inclination to be—"a friend of the world, is"—literally, *constitutes himself*—"the enemy of God."

The word here translated "friend" is that term of endearment (*philos*—a loved one) which the Lord gave to His disciples just before He suffered (John 15:14). The term "friend" He applied later that same evening to Judas (Matt. 26:50) is a very different word, signifying simply a fellow or comrade.

We learn then that to *desire* intimacy with the world is to be the enemy of God. And this leads to the pointed question, "Do ye think that the Scripture saith in vain, The Spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?" The Revised Version spells the word "Spirit" with an initial capital letter, thus indicating that the Holy Spirit is here referred to. And this is no doubt correct; for it is not conceivable that it should be man's own spirit that would be moved to jealous longing because of his showing affectionate or trustful regard for the world, which is God's

great rival for the confidence of men. Moreover, the word rendered "dwelleth" is literally "took up his abode"; and of course it is only of the Holy Spirit that it could be said that "He took up His abode in us." The Spirit Who has *come to dwell in us* would shut out the love of the world.

The reference which James makes to the Holy Spirit at this point is very appropriate; for the Spirit is given to help our infirmity in the presence of those strong enemies of whom he was speaking. The reference serves further to make it plain that James addresses the saints of this dispensation.

The word rendered lusteth (*epipotheo*) signifies to long intensely for, to crave earnestly for, to desire ardently to possess. So we get as the sense of the verse the idea of God's jealous longing for the *entire* affection and confidence of His beloved people.

There seems to be no particular "Scripture" that is referred to, but rather the thought expressed in various Scriptures, as "the spirit of jealousy" in Numbers 5:14, and such passages as Numbers 25:11; Deuteronomy 4:24, etc.

"But He giveth more grace."

God's stores of grace are inexhaustible, and are adapted to every need. What is needed in the case here under consideration is grace to withstand the blandishments of the world, and to overcome those natural instincts of our own hearts which prompt us to seek aid or consolation from worldly sources, or to listen to worldly counsel when difficulties or dangers beset us.

HUMILITY AND PRIDE

But there is ever a condition to be met by those who would be the recipients of grace, and that con-

dition is *humility*. Hence James immediately quotes Proverbs 3:34: “God resisteth the proud, but *giveth grace to the humble*.” God must needs resist the proud, because the proud resist Him. Pride in man is a delusion produced by satanic power. Its essence lies in the thought that he can get along, and make a way for himself, and be happy, *apart from God*. Humility, on the contrary, is that state wherein a man recognizes in the depths of his heart his dependence upon God *for everything*. When sinful man is brought, through the working of God’s Word and Spirit, to a true and just sense of his condition as a lost and helpless sinner, guilty and condemned, and is hence ready to accept salvation as a free gift through Jesus Christ, then “*grace*” saves him. And ever thereafter God “*giveth more grace*” as the need arises, and as the saved one *owns his helplessness without it*.

Since Christ has died for guilty sinners and has risen again and ascended “*the throne of grace*” (Heb. 4:14), God’s free grace, which bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men (Tit. 2:12). But *pride* in the hearts of men resists and shuts out the grace that would pardon and save and heal. Pride is the Jericho in men’s hearts which must come down ere the sinner can enter into the heavenly places of God’s favor. God gives grace to the humble because the humble are ready to receive it.

The words “*He giveth more grace*” are a further proof that this Epistle belongs to the dispensation of grace.

The exhortations which follow, “*Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God and He will draw nigh*

to you" (vv. 7, 8), are based upon the truth of verse 6, that God giveth grace to the humble.

Submission of ourselves to God is the way to obtain His grace. The devil is the author of pride, and the one who instigates men to assume a position of independency. Hence the devil is here referred to, and the injunction is given to *resist him*. To this is coupled the comforting assurance that he will flee from us.

Peter writes to the same effect, saying, "*Humble yourselves* therefore under the mighty hand of God.

. . . Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour. *Whom resist*, stedfast **in** the faith." And then he immediately adds, "*But the God of all grace . . . make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you*" (1 Pet. 5:6-10).

Thus we are taught by both James and Peter that humility, grace, and victory over the devil go together.

God resists the proud, because the proud resist him; but the humble are to *resist the devil*, who must flee from them, because God is with the contrite and lowly (Isa. 57:15).

Then we are to "draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to us." The further away the devil flees, the nearer God comes to us (v. 8).

Our passage continues: "Cleanse your hands ye sinners, and purify your hearts ye double minded" (v. 8). There was much washing of hands among the Jews. It constituted a large part of their daily ceremonial. For they never ate a meal or a morsel except they washed their hands oft (M'k. 7:3, etc.). But there was no heed given by them to the far more

important matter of cleansing their *hearts*. Hence James characteristically demands that the *inward* cleansing accompany the *outward*. This admonition is addressed specially to men of "double-soul," an expression we have already noticed (1:8). It is particularly pertinent here, where rebuke and warnings are given to those vacillating ones of "double-soul" who look sometimes to God, and sometimes to the world.

Of course the expression "cleanse your hands" is to be taken in a figurative sense, signifying to keep the hand from sinful acts, while the heart is kept from sinful thoughts and desires. The admonition "draw nigh to God" brings to mind the need of purification of hands and heart. The Lord said "Blessed are the pure *in heart*; for they shall *see God*" (Mat. 5:8).

Continuing James says: "Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep; let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness" (v. 9).

It is not to be understood from this that God wishes His people to be downcast and gloomy; for it is, on the contrary, their duty to "rejoice in the Lord always," and their privilege to be "filled with joy and peace in believing." But we have, in the passage before us, admonitions and exhortations to saints who are not walking worthy of their high calling, but are striving among themselves, who are away from God, and are courting the favors of the world. Such are called upon to realize their true condition; for the word "be afflicted" signifies to realize one's wretchedness (see Strong's Conc.); so that what we have here is in the nature of a call to repentance and godly sorrow, which, as Paul says, "worketh repentance to salvation, not to be repented of" (2 Cor. 7:10).

To be living in such a way as practically to deny that worthy Name which has been called upon us, is a serious matter, and must lead to serious consequences for ourselves; but more serious still is it to think we are rich, and increased with goods, and in need of nothing, when in reality we are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked (Rev. 3:17). Hence the call to "realize your wretchedness," and to mourn and weep over the conditions that are here reproved.

If we follow this admonition it will bring us into a state of humility, and when in that state we can always count upon help from the Lord. Hence the concluding words of the passage: "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He shall lift you up" (v. 10).

Humility is pleasing to God, not because He would have us entertain a worse opinion of ourselves than we deserve, but simply because humility is befitting those who can say no better thing of themselves than that they are sinners saved by grace. To be saved *by grace* means that we were too hopelessly corrupt and vile to be saved in any other way. Hence humility on our part is simply *the acknowledging of the truth*; and it follows that any "lifting up" of ourselves is a *denial of the truth*, and hence an offence to the God of Truth. But if we humble ourselves in His sight, He, in perfect keeping with His own character as "the God of all *grace*," can and *will* "lift us up."

Peter uses almost the same words, as we have seen, saying: "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that *He* may exalt you in due time" (1 Pet. 5:6).

EVIL SPEAKING

Much is said in the Scripture in condemnation of the sin of evil speaking, against which we have need of constant watchfulness and prayer.

Evil speaking is the fruit of pride; for it is a lofty opinion of oneself that leads to thinking and speaking ill of others. Often the (perhaps unconscious) thought is that, by putting others down, we exalt, by comparison, ourselves. Hence, if we carry in our minds a right and just estimate of our own selves, that is to say, if we are properly and truthfully *humble*, then we will have no disposition to say any evil thing of another. Therefore we appropriately have at this point the admonition, "Speak not evil one of another, brethren" (4:11); for there is an immediate connection between verse 10, which calls us to humble ourselves, and verse 11, which says, "Speak not evil one of another."

Peter, in dealing with this subject, shows that the consequence of evil speaking is the shortening of one's life. He says, "For he that will love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile" (1 Pet. 3:10). This is practically a quotation from Psalm 34:12.

James, however, presents this sin as a direct offence against the law, saying: "He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law thou art not a *doer* of the law, but a *judge*."

Here again James asserts the majesty of the law; and declares its permanence; and in so doing he sets forth Christianity as being the continuation and completion of true Judaism. It is not the letter of the

law which James asserts, but the spirit thereof. It is "law" in the New Testament sense. For obviously the man who sits in judgment on his brother is so far from humbling himself before the Word of God, that he actually exalts himself above it, assuming to be a judge of others, whom he summons before himself, so to speak, to hear from his lips the solemn sentence of judgment.

In so doing one invites the severity of God, for the Lord has said "Judge not, that ye be not judged" (Matt. 7:1).

Moreover, another, and even more serious, feature of this offence is, that it really sets God aside; for He is the *only* Lawgiver and Judge. James points this out in the next words: "There is One Lawgiver, Who is able to save and to destroy; who art thou that judgest another?" (v. 12).

This is a searching and a solemn question. If we realize, though but faintly, what an awful thing is *judgment*; if we bear in mind that "eternal judgment" was our rightful portion, and that nothing but the death of God's beloved Son could save us from it; and if we remember that God alone is the rightful Judge, and has committed *all* judgment unto the Son (John 5:22), then the words "*who art thou* that judgest another," will surely put the fear of God into our hearts.

The apostle Paul likewise asks a similar question: "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth" (Rom. 14:4). Let us then be "swift to hear" all the words which admonish us as to what we are, and which lead us to self-judgment. There is in fact so much that is amiss in every one of us that, if we would but

apply ourselves to the correction of *our own* faults, we should have neither time nor inclination to speak of, much less to pass judgment upon, the faults of others.

THE UNCERTAINTY OF LIFE

The spirit of the natural man is a spirit of pride and self-sufficiency; and it is the manifestation of that spirit which is rebuked in the passage upon which we have been commenting. Another manifestation of the same spirit is noticed in the next verse: “Go to now, ye that say, Today or tomorrow we will go into such a city, and continue there *a year*, and buy and sell, and get gain” (v. 13).

It is in a spirit of pride and self-confidence that men speak thus (as they do habitually), in utter forgetfulness of God, and in forgetfulness also of the fact that they are but perishing creatures, whose lives hang by a fragile thread. And not only so, but even if a man *could* count upon the prolongation of his life for “*a year*,” the future is absolutely hidden from him, and the unforeseen things may upset his best laid plans.

These facts (known to all men but by nearly all ignored) are forcefully brought to mind by the next verse: “Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little while, and then vanisheth away” (v. 14).

These are *facts*; and they are facts which, if allowed to have their proper weight with men, would bring them into a state of due humility, and would force them to realize their entire dependence upon God, both to prolong their lives, and also to shape

the course of events. The man who sets God aside and plans for his future, saying, "Tomorrow I will go there, or will do this," is as foolish as one who would plan for the future of the misty vapor that rises from the earth in the early morning.

If, therefore, it is folly for all men thus to plan for that which is entirely in God's hand, how much more so for His own people? Yet how many of them are manifesting continually their need of this very lesson!

We would observe that here again James follows closely the Lord's teaching given in His Sermon on the Mount, where He forbids taking thought for the morrow (Matt. 6:25-34). As Christ Himself puts it the emphasis is not on the *folly* of laying out plans for a future which may never be at all, and of which, in any case, we can know nothing beforehand, but on the comforting fact that our Father in heaven, Who holds the future in His own hand, has *charged Himself* with the entire responsibility for all the needs of all His children. It should be enough for us that our "times are in His hand."

James continues, "For that we ought to say, *if the Lord will*, we shall live and do this or that" (v. 15). It may not be necessary in every case (though it can never be amiss) to utter these or like *words*; but the substance of the lesson is that we should *be always mindful* of the fact that we have no certainty of any "tomorrow" in this world; and that if we have a tomorrow we do not know what it will bring forth. Hence we should always act and speak in accordance with that fact.

"But now," says James, "ye rejoice in your boastings; all such rejoicing is vain" (v. 16). In this

verse the words "rejoice" and "boasting" have very much the same meaning. The verse might be rendered, "Ye vaunt yourselves in your boastings." Thus pride is again rebuked.

The last verse of this chapter states in few words a fact of vast importance, and one which nevertheless is generally disregarded. To most minds "sin" consists in the *doing* of some flagrant act of immorality or wickedness. But the Word of God points out that sin may be found in the *not doing* of something that one ought to do. So James says: "Therefore, to him that knoweth *to do good* and *doeth it not*, to him it is *sin*" (v. 17).

A question will naturally arise here in regard to the word "Therefore." To what, in the preceding context, is James referring? For he had not been speaking of sins of omission.

We would suggest that the word "therefore" is a reference to the *whole trend* of the teaching of this Epistle, which is, as we have pointed out, to the effect that the mere *knowing* of the Word (or Law) of God, and the mere *saying* of the truth, is of no avail; but that the essential thing in God's eyes is always the *doing* of that which is right. One may admire the Law, may speak highly of it, and may even teach it to others; but what will that avail him if he fails to *do* the things commanded?

Here again we have a marked resemblance to the Lord's own teaching in the Sermon on the Mount, which He brings to a conclusion by likening everyone who hears those sayings of His, and *does them not*, to the foolish man who built his house upon the sand.

We are reminded by the words of James 4:17 that

the sin for which men are “*condemned*” is *not something they have done*, but something they should have done, but have *omitted to do*. For the Lord has plainly said, “He that *believeth not* is *condemned already*, because he hath *not believed* in the Name of the only-begotten Son of God” (John 3:18). For God has given to sinful men a Saviour, and He *commands* them to “believe on the Name of His Son, Jesus Christ” that they may be saved (1 John 3:23). Hence *not to believe in Him* is the sin for which there is no remedy.

In another connection the Lord said, “If ye were blind ye should have no sin” (literally *would not have sin*, meaning in the particular matter then in view) “but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth” (John 9:41).

Again, in still another connection, He said: “And that servant, which *knew his lord's will*, and prepared not himself, neither *did according to his will*, shall be beaten with many stripes” (Lu. 12:47).

The prophet Samuel said on one occasion to the people of Israel, “God forbid that I should *sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray* for you” (1 Sam. 12:23). Let this remind us that we are commanded to pray “for all saints” (Eph. 6:18), “for all men” (1 Tim. 2:1), and “for all that are in authority” (1 Tim. 2:2). To know this, and to fail to do it is sin.

We have, therefore, a very searching Scripture before us, which leaves in us no room and no footing for pride; and which shows us the presence of sin, even where we may have supposed ourselves to be quite blameless.

CHAPTER IX

THE LAST DAYS. HEAPING UP RICHES. "CAPITAL" AND "LABOR"

We come now to the last chapter of James, a chapter whose contents are of peculiar importance for "the last days." We do well, therefore, to give the closest attention to what is here written for our admonition.

The chapter foretells the conditions which would exist at the time of the end. It speaks definitely of "the last days" (v. 3). It exhorts the brethren to be patient "unto the coming of the Lord" (v. 7). It assures them that "the coming of the Lord draweth nigh" (v. 8); that "the Judge standeth at the door" (v. 9). And twice it refers to the latter rain (vv. 7, 18).

There is an evident progression in the teaching given in this Epistle. At the beginning, God is put before us as the Father of lights and the Giver of every good gift; and the first of gifts—the new birth—is mentioned. Then the new born children are exhorted to be swift to hear, and thereby to receive the *implanted* word which is able to save their souls. From that point onward the teaching is always with a view to producing in the children of God the conformity of the *inward* man to the image of Christ, so that the outward conduct may be the fruit thereof. We have practical lessons on the great subjects of *Pure Religion*, *Live Faith*, and *True Wisdom*, in an advancing series. Finally the spirit of pride, which is the leading characteristic of the natural man, is re-

buked; and the lesson of *humility*, the most essential thing as being the condition of all blessing, is strongly emphasized. This brings us to the last chapter, which is largely *prophetic*.

First of all is a vivid sketch foretelling the miserable end of *riches*, and the approaching miseries of those who devote themselves to the accumulation of the wealth of this world. This connects directly with the subject of the preceding chapter (pride, self-confidence and independency of God) for money is what sustains pride in man, and fosters within him the thought that he is independent of God, and the master of his own destiny.

The Lord Jesus Christ, in His Sermon on the Mount, referred to Mammon, the god of riches, as the "master" of those who do not serve and trust God. This line of separation between the two classes has become clearer and clearer as the centuries have passed by; and now, "in the last days," we find, as foretold by James, a clearly defined *class* of "rich men," known as "capitalists, or "financiers," men who form a class by themselves *simply and solely* because they have in their hands the control of *the finances of the world*. It has taken centuries of time to develop this state of things; and few perhaps are aware that, *only in our day has it come to full maturity*.

Efforts have heretofore been made to control the world, and to establish dominion over the souls of men by *force*, and (as in the case of Romanism) by usurping authority over their consciences. Those efforts, however, have met with but partial success. But within comparatively recent times a more subtle and more successful attempt to gain the mastery of the

world has been made. Certain individuals gifted with unusual astuteness, or possibly inspired by satanic cleverness, have come to see that if they could gain control of the *finances* of the world they could thereby control all the industries and activities of mankind. They can even control governments, since the operation of governments in our day is largely a matter of finances. For it is obvious that the industries of the world depend upon money; and even "governments" require for their operations the constant support of finances and the financiers. It is easy, therefore, to see that the men who control the finances of the world are the real masters, not only of its industries, but of its governments and peoples as well.

The rule of Mammon (or "Capitalism" which is its modern conventional name) has developed in a very mysterious way, the whole subject of "finance" being so involved in complexities and mysteries that but a few are able to follow its intricate workings. Thus the devotees and priests of Mammon have been able gradually, and *without attracting too much attention to themselves*, to extend their control over human affairs until, at the present time, it is almost absolute.

This control of "Capital" or "Mammon" is all the more difficult to escape and to resist, because it is *spiritual* in character, and hence its workings are invisible. This is the source of its strength. It is no part of our present purpose to delve into this mysterious subject; but it is pertinent to observe (as some have been able to discern even without the light of God's truth) that the mass of mankind have been brought into submission to the dominion of the great

god "Capital," because they have been deceived into accepting the monstrous fiction that gold is "wealth," and that such power inheres in it that *nothing can be done for the good of mankind without it.*

They have also been drilled into the acceptance of the false notion that the "economic laws," so called, which control prices and markets, trade movements, panics, scarcity of money, and of commodities, etc., producing mysterious fluctuations, sometimes slight and gradual, sometimes wide and violent, are like the laws of nature—beyond human control. This is a huge delusion; for the so-called "economic laws" are arbitrarily imposed upon human industry, being simply the manipulations of those who have managed to get the control of the world's finances, and the highly artificial machinery of finance, into their capable hands.

It needs but a few moments of clear thinking to enable anyone of ordinary intelligence to see that there is no more inherent power in gold to make the wheels of industry go round, to bring up food out of the earth, to support governments, and to command the services of men, than there is in lead, or wood, or stone. The whole thing—the world-rule of gold—is a pure convention, a creature of man's own devising, an *idol* to which men have been induced to yield their devotion. The "financiers" are simply the priests who serve this great god for their own profit; and the so-called "economic laws" are simply the fluctuations in trade-conditions and "markets" which they see fit to bring about for the better accomplishment of their own purposes.

All this is simply the fulfilling of the Word of God, which has shown us beforehand the almost universal

dominion of the god of gold, and has shown us also its overthrow, and the miserable end of those who give themselves over to the service and pursuit of riches. The knowledge of the facts to which we have briefly referred would be likely to drive a man (unless he be himself a “financier”) into Bolshevism, or some other form of Socialism—and it is having that effect at the present time. But those who get their knowledge from the Word of God have a clear understanding as to the end of these things; and *they* know that the true and only remedy is to be patient, *unto the coming of the Lord* (v. 7).

THE COMING MISERIES OF THE RICH

That which is highly esteemed among men, that which flourishes in this present evil world, that which procures for its owners place, power and pleasure, must needs come to a miserable end, in that day when the lofty looks of man shall be bowed down. “For the day of the Lord of hosts* shall be upon every one that is *proud* and *lofty*, and upon every one that is *lifted up*; and he shall be *brought low*” (Isa. 2:11, 12).

James, in the beginning of his Epistle, calls upon the rich (believer) to rejoice in *that he is made low* (1:10); and we have only to read the opening verses of chapter 5 to discover abundant reason why any of the children of God who were rich in the worldly sense should rejoice, if indeed he *has been made low* through the humbling grace of God, and *has found deliverance*, through the cross of Christ, from the

* It is perhaps significant that this title “Lord of hosts” (Sabaoth) occurs in James 5:4, and nowhere else in the New Testament, except as a quotation from the Old in Rom. 9:29.

conditions and occupations of heart and mind which are common to all who give themselves to the service of Mammon.

For our Epistle declares, in language that is remarkable for its force and clearness, that "miseries" are to come upon the "rich men" of the world, and that those miseries will be such as to cause them, at their mere approach, to "weep and howl."

There is no distinction made in this Scripture between certain "rich men" and others. It includes them all, without regard to whether they are saved or unsaved. But some will say, "surely this Scripture is not to be applied to rich men who are believers"; to which we can only reply that we dare not make a distinction where God has made none. Furthermore, "riches," as such, are precisely the same thing in the hands of one man as in the hands of another; and if children of God close their eyes to the plain teaching of His Word, and give themselves to the pursuit of gain by the same methods as practiced by the people of the world, on what ground can they expect to escape participation in the miseries of the rich? There are among us, as we are aware, those who would so "divide the word of truth" as to reserve for themselves all the benefits of worldly riches, and pass on the "miseries" to the Jews. But is there any warrant for dividing things in that way?

We know of a business man, a professed saint, prominent in certain religious enterprises, who is so "successful" in business that he pays thousands of dollars income tax to the Government. Not only is his devotion to business quite marked, but he demands the same devotion of his employees. For example, he forbade an employee to read the Scriptures on the

way to the office, because it was a good time to be planning the work of the day; and he objected to anything being done for the Lord at night (as gospel-preaching on the street) lest the employee should not be fresh and keen for business next morning. And not only so, but in order to justify these demands he quoted the words "No man can serve two masters." Is it difficult to see what "master" that brother is serving?

THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE RICH

There are some Christians who, when they succeed in getting large gains through their business enterprise and sagacity, speak of it as a "blessing" from the Lord. But we find nothing in the New Testament to support the idea that success in the pursuit of money is a "blessing." The Lord has not said, "Blessed are the rich"; but He has most distinctly said, "Blessed be ye *poor*; But *woe* unto you that are rich! for ye *have received your consolation*" (Luke 6:20, 24). Those saints who "will to be rich," and who devote their energies and time to the attainment of this object, *may indeed be allowed to succeed*. But what a price they will pay for having "received their consolation" in a world where their Lord had not where to lay His head!

The apostle Paul says, "And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that *will* to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which *drown men in destruction and perdition*. For the love of money is the root of all evil" (literally a root of every sort of evil) "which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows" (1 Tim. 6:8-10). And he adds:

“But thou, O man of God, *flee these things.*” One cannot *pursue* a thing and *flee from it* at the same time.

Certainly these Scriptures do not encourage saints to engage in the pursuit of gain, or to regard its acquisition as a “blessing.” On the contrary God makes it very plain in the epistle of James that He has *chosen the poor of this world* (2:5), and that, as appears by the opening verses of chapter 5, He regards the holders of the wealth of the world as being *unjustly* in the possession and enjoyment of it. And how could it be regarded otherwise when there are millions of wretchedly poor in the world, whose poverty is the *direct result* of the *very same “financial” operations* which have put the wealth of the world into the hands of the few “rich men”? So long as there are poor whose sufferings are not relieved, can the holding and hoarding of wealth, which ought to be used to succor them, be anything but a sin in God’s eyes? If the rich man, be he saint or sinner, disregards the miseries of *the poor*, which are before his eyes every day, on what ground can he expect to escape the “miseries” of *the rich*?

Therefore, it behooves those of the Lord’s people who are in possession of “this world’s goods” to consider carefully their responsibility, and to seek wisdom from above as to how they should discharge it. Their opportunity is to make to themselves friends of the Mammon of unrighteousness (Luke 16:9); but it is greatly to be feared that many of them are more anxious about making profitable “investments” for the time that now is. What will be the end of those “investments” which occupy so much time and thought, and which are made with such painstaking

care? Let the rich that are among us consider this in the light of eternity. Let them also consider well these words of Him Who, though *He* was rich, yet for our sakes became *poor*: “Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which *wax not old*, a treasure in the heavens *that faileth not*, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth” (Luke 12:33).

MOTH AND RUST

We have pointed out several times how closely James follows the Sermon on the Mount, both in the topics he treats, and also in the order in which he treats them. Here we have another instance. For in the Sermon on the Mount the Lord deals first with *prayer*, teaching the children of God that, as regards the things necessary for this life, they are to ask their Father in heaven, day by day; and then He goes on to teach them *not* to treasure up for themselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal; but to treasure up for themselves treasures in heaven (Matt. 6). These two topics are closely related, because *real trust in our Father in heaven would remove all incentive to treasure up for ourselves treasures on earth*.

James treats the same topics, *i. e.*, (1) trust in God, expressing itself in prayer, and (2) amassing wealth; but he treats them from a different point of view. For he speaks not of the happy or “blessed” consequences of following the Lord’s teaching, but of the *unhappy* consequence of not following it. Thus, in chapter 4, he tells of the result of failure in prayer—“Ye have not because ye ask not”—and since not having may impel to the attempt to gain wealth, and through wealth the things it will procure, James pro-

ceeds to declare what will be the end of hoarded riches, namely, the consuming thereof as by the ravages of moths, and as by the cankering or rusting of the gold and silver. Thus he says it will be with those who have "treasured up" wealth for "the last days" (v. 3). He uses here the same word "treasure up" used by the Lord in Matthew 6:19, 20 (rendered in the A. V. "lay up").

The language is, of course, figurative. Riches are here viewed as of two general sorts—hard metallic substances, as gold and silver, and soft goods, as rich fabrics. But whether of one sort or another, there is a corresponding *destroying agency*, the moth for the latter and rust for the former; and the destruction will be sure and complete.

But there is a further thought in verse 3, where we read: "Your gold and silver is cankered; and the *rust of them shall be a witness against you*, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire." The idea here is that wealth which might have been put to use in the relief of the poor is allowed to rust, as it were through disuse, in the owner's hands. That "rust" of disuse will be a witness against him; and, moreover, it will be to him as a tormenting fire. It is evident that a large part of the "torment" of the rich man in Luke 16 was due to the remorseful realization of his heartless failure to relieve the sufferings of Lazarus. The latter was a brother Israelite, and hence it was the duty of the rich man, according to "Moses and the prophets," to succour him and meet his needs.

GOD'S INDICTMENT OF THE RICH

Verses 4-6 contain a fearful indictment of the rich. In the first place, it is definitely charged that the ac-

cumulation of wealth in the hands of the few is the result of systematic "fraud" practiced upon the toiling masses, whereby the latter are deprived of a part of their "hire." This charge is just. For though it would be too much to say that all rich men have gained their wealth by dishonest practices, and by taking unfair advantage of the laborers, it is nevertheless true that the existing economic system (called in the Bible "Mammon," and in modern speech "Capitalism") is a gigantic "fraud," whereby the industry of the entire "civilized" world, embracing the sum total of all human activities, is held in absolute thraldom to "high finance." Such being the case, as (in the light of Scripture and of nature as well) it surely is, all who, through the inequities of the system itself, are enriched beyond the fair value of their own labor, are indirectly liable for the benefits they have unfairly derived. God has so often and so clearly declared His abhorrence of such unjust differences between human beings who *all alike* are by nature guilty, condemned and lost, as to make certain that He cannot but be displeased wherever a man holds possession of worldly wealth while human want goes unrelieved. Even generous giving in such cases does not meet God's demand; for He looks not on what one *gives*, but on what he *withholds for himself* (M'k. 12:41-44).

In Proverbs 22:16 the lesson we are now considering is thus stated: "He that oppresseth the poor to increase his riches, and he that giveth to the rich, shall surely come to want." But James points out that all who make gain through that system which automatically filches the wages of the laborers, are indirectly (though it may be quite unconsciously) op-

pressing the poor. The “want” here spoken of may not come in this life; but come it surely will. For we have before us these clear words, “Behold, the hire of your labourers, who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth; and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth” (hosts).

Compare the words of Habakkuk: “Woe unto him that gaineth an evil gain (marg.) to his house, that he may set his nest on high, that he may be delivered from the power of evil”—thus making money his deliverer—“Behold it is not of *the Lord of hosts* that the people shall labour in the very fire, and the people shall weary (or exhaust) themselves for very vanity” (Hab. 2:9, 13).

THE “PROFITEERS”

Warnings to the rich, who oppress the poor and make gain at their expense, are found in various parts of the Bible. The tenth Psalm speaks very definitely and impressively concerning those who “persecute the poor” (v. 2). In verse 3 we are told (taking the marginal reading) that “The wicked boasteth of his heart’s desire, *the covetous blesseth himself*, he abhorreth the Lord.” We can but acknowledge the truth of this. The covetousness of the natural heart prompts us to the acquisition of money, in order that we may *bless ourselves*, that is to say, may provide our own pleasures and happiness. This sets God aside as the Blesser. It dispenses with His blessings; and thus He is “abhorred.”

Further we read in this Psalm concerning the covetous man: “He hath said in his heart, I shall not be moved; for I shall never be in adversity” (v. 6). Thus he *secretly* counts upon his money to protect

him, though he would not perhaps openly avow it. As Solomon says, "The rich man's wealth is his strong city" (Prov. 10:15). In this way again God is set aside, and money is made an idol.

Then follows a description of the fraud, deceit and craft whereby those who are greedy of gain pursue their ends; and we are reminded that it is always "the poor" who suffer most; for those who have to buy in the smallest quantities are compelled to pay the highest prices (vv. 7-10). The former are, in our day, called "profiteers," and are often publicly denounced; but no effective measures have been devised whereby to prevent their oppressive doings. They fear neither human justice nor divine; for *in their heart* they say, "God hath forgotten; He hideth His face; He will never see it" (v. 11). And once more we read concerning the profiteer: "He hath said *in his heart*, Thou wilt not require it" (v. 13). But God's Word declares that He *has* "seen" it, and *has* "heard" the cry of the poor; and that He will re-quite them (vv. 14,17).

These warnings are *for us*, to the end that we may watch continually against the covetousness of our own hearts. It is to His own disciples that Christ says, "Take heed, and beware of covetousness" (Lu. 12:15); and the apostle Paul warns those who have by faith died with Christ, and whose life is hid with Him, against "covetousness, which is idolatry" (Col. 3:15).

These warnings are particularly applicable to "the last days," wherein it is foretold that men will be "lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud," etc. (2 Tim. 3:1-2).

LOVERS OF PLEASURES

Returning to James, the next count in the indictment against the rich is stated in these words: "Ye have lived *in pleasure* in the earth and been wanton." That sinners and rebels against God, who have been clearly warned that they are on the road to eternal woe, should nevertheless possess themselves of means whereby they may *live in pleasure* on the earth, is an exceedingly grievous thing in God's eyes.

It has been specially foretold that, "in the last days," men in general should be "lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God" (2 Tim. 3:1-5).

This is fulfilled in what we now see glaringly displayed before our eyes; for the people of this generation are mad after pleasures and amusements of every description. Hence the exceeding care to be exercised by all the saints, especially the young, to avoid having any part with the pleasure-seekers of these last and perilous times.

To those who have lived in pleasure on the earth and been self-indulgent, James says, "Ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter." The meaning of this can be gathered by giving heed to the significance of the words "a day of slaughter" (see Jer. 12:3). The thought is that as one feeds up and pampers an animal that is soon to be slaughtered, even so those who live in self-gratification and pleasure-seeking are, as it were, nourishing their own hearts for the judgment that is soon to overtake them.

And the justice of that judgment is manifest from the last count of this severe indictment: "Ye have condemned, ye have killed the just; and he doth not resist you" (v. 6).

It inevitably happens in times of oppression that those who do not resist suffer even to the loss of life. But the rich are, as a rule, callously indifferent to the effects upon others of the operation of a system which enriches themselves. Hence the judgment which awaits them at the hands of a righteous God if they continue in the path of self-pleasing, refusing the mercy He has even for such. For with God it is possible to save even the rich, though it be as difficult as to make a camel pass through the eye of a needle (M'k. 10:23-27).

CHAPTER X

THE COMING OF THE LORD. THE PATIENCE OF JOB. OATHS

The gross inequalities of the last days, and the evil system which has produced a few men enormously rich, and a great mass of people who are wretchedly poor, will be brought to an end by the *coming of the Lord*. The present social order will continue till then. Socialism will never be established. For not only does this prophecy of James show the present order still in existence at the time of the end, but other prophecies also show the same. Thus, among those whom John sees frantically but vainly endeavoring to flee from the wrath of the Lamb, are “the rich men” (Rev. 6:15). They may before that have a bad fright through various forms of anarchy, as “Bolshevism”; but the brief career of antichrist will be characterized by the *absolute control* of trade and commerce; for no man will be permitted to “buy or sell” save those who have the mark of the “Beast” (Rev. 13:16, 17). It is easy now to see how this absolute control of all kinds of traffic and its concentration in a strong central agency can be secured; for the process is already far advanced.

In view of these things, James exhorts the people of God to be patient unto the coming of the Lord. In giving this exhortation to those saints who find themselves exposed to the stringency of the end times, he takes the same illustration used by the Lord (and also by John the Baptist and by Paul) to represent

this present age, namely, the illustration of the harvest field.

There is a peculiar fitness in this illustration, because this is the age of Pentecost—the long period corresponding to the summer time in Palestine, which came between the feast of Pentecost and that of Trumpets (Lev. 23). Our Lord is “the First-fruits of them that slept” (1 Cor. 15: 20); and we are “a kind of first-fruits” (James 1:18). All the “grass,” humanity—the unregenerate—will perish (Jam. 1:10; 1 Pet. 1:24).

So we believe there is in the words of James a deeper meaning than appears on the surface: “Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he (it) receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts; for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh” (vv. 7, 8).

Taking this passage in connection with the reference to Elijah’s prayer for rain, following a long period of dearth and drought (vv. 17, 18), we find in it encouragement to expect and to *pray for* a manifestation of God’s working at this time of the end, such as will, so to speak, increase *the yield* and improve *the quality* of “the precious fruit of the earth.”

In thus viewing the text we do not overlook the modern movement known as “Pentecostalism,” and the application which the leaders of that movement make of this passage and of others which refer to the “latter rain.” We are convinced that the spiritual energy which has carried on the so-called “Pentecostal” movement is not of God; though the situation is confused by the fact that many true saints of God have been swept along by it, and, of course, their

testimony and activities in the gospel have produced results which make it appear as if God's hand were in it to some extent. We regard this movement as a clever attempt of the enemy to injure the saints, to divide them further, and to prevent them from recognizing the hand of God when He *does* begin to work. To this end he would deceive the unwary by means of spurious "signs," and would stumble others by the extravagancies of doctrine and behaviour which have characterized the movement from the beginning.

In the strict, historical sense of the word we cannot expect a second "Pentecost," any more than a second Bethlehem, or a second Calvary. Pentecost was an historical event—the descent of the Holy Spirit from heaven to earth, here to abide throughout the age. It will not occur again. But there is nothing to forbid the expectation that there will be special manifestations of the working of God's Spirit in the times of the end.

Nor do we see in the Scriptures anything to indicate that the close of the age will be characterized by signs and miracles such as were wrought "by the hands of the apostles" (Acts 5:12), and which Paul called "the signs of *an apostle*" (2 Cor. 12:12). We have no more warrant, so far as we can see, to look for the signs of the apostles, than we have to look for the apostles themselves.

On the other hand, the Scriptures repeatedly warn of *spurious* signs and wonders which are to appear at the time of the end, and in such connections as likely to deceive the very elect (2 Thess. 2:6; Rev. 13:14). Hence manifestations of that sort should rather excite our suspicion than gain our confidence. The miracles whereby God "gave testimony unto the

word of His grace" (Acts 14:3), when that word was as yet unwritten, and when such attestation was obviously needed, are not to be expected again. He would be a rash man indeed who would presume in any way to limit the workings of the Holy Spirit; but we are bound to take note of the fact that miracles were wrought at the beginning to attest the *new message*, the Word of the Gospel, and the *messengers* who brought it, as coming from God. We, however, have received it as a *fully attested Word*, needing no further proof to establish its Divine origin.

The operations of the Spirit in apostolic times were all with the definite object of building up the saints, and of empowering them to live together in the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace, to manifest love one to another, to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things, and to shine as lights in the world holding forth the Word of life.

Therefore, if, following the present period of protracted spiritual drought, there should be a season of special reviving from the presence of the Lord, answering to the "latter rain," we should expect it to be manifested in individual godliness, separation from the world, a drawing together of those who are truly the Lord's and are looking for Him, and in a word, a repetition of the conditions described in Acts 2:42-47. And along with this there would be a *great revival of true Gospel-effort*, resulting in many being saved from the wrath to come, and in being healed of their diseases. Such things would be not in the nature of "signs" to prove that the Gospel is Divine (for we insist that the proof thereof is complete), but merely the normal results of the preaching of the Gospel in the power of the Holy Ghost. For the

salvation of God is a *complete* salvation, meeting the needs of the complete man—spirit, soul and body.

THE PATIENCE OF JOB

In connection with the coming of the Lord to end the oppression of the poor saints, a warning is given that He Who is soon to appear will judge all our works (v. 9). And then the subject of *patience in the presence of trials*, with which the Epistle began, is taken up again (vv. 10, 11).

Here we meet the familiar words: “Behold we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy” (v. 11). The word “patience” connects this verse with the exhortation of verses 7 and 8, “Be patient, therefore, brethren,” “Be ye also patient.”

“Patience” is that virtue whereby its possessor is enabled to endure the severest trials with resignation and quiet submission to the will of God. It involves also a recognition of God’s hand and purpose in the trials, and a determination to wait for His purpose therein to be accomplished. Trials are not generally regarded as a source of happiness; and therefore it needs faith, and an understanding of the purpose of God’s dealings to “count them *happy* which *endure*.” It is more natural to count them happy which escape trials, and to count those who undergo trials as *unhappy*.

In this instance the tried ones are encouraged by the assurance that God has a definite “end” or purpose in all the afflictions which befall His people. Moreover, “the end of the Lord” is always for their ultimate good; and it is so greatly to be desired that

they who endure tribulations are even to be counted "happy." And thus it would be if we really believed the Word of God concerning these very common experiences, "whereof *all* are partakers" (Heb. 12:8). But as a general rule we count them happy who have no trials and afflictions, and them unhappy who have to endure experiences of that sort.

In this connection James gives us a short but very illuminating commentary on Job. It is the more worthy of careful study, because it is the only reference to Job (except the mention of his name in Ezekiel 14:14, 20) in the other Scriptures. It seems that the book of Job has been given us in order mainly to reveal God's purpose in permitting afflictions to befall His people. And this is with the double object of, first, encouraging them to endure the trial with patience, and second to teach us that we must not allow visitations of this sort to make us doubt or question the fact that the Lord is always "very pitiful and of tender mercy."*

It appears from the Scriptures, and is also a matter of common experience, that the chastenings of the Lord usually take the form of bodily sicknesses. Hence we find in this exceedingly practical Epistle of James the complete teaching that we need for all cases of sickness among the Lord's people. In verse 11 is the *purpose* to be accomplished by them; and in verses 14-16 are the *directions* to be followed by the people of God. To these we refer below.

Job might, in his sickness, have resorted to the physicians of his day, and conceivably they might have healed him of his disease. But what a loss that

* For a further discussion of this passage see the Editor's booklet "The Diseases of Egypt."

would have been to him, and to all subsequent generations! For neither he nor they would, in that case, "have seen the end of the Lord" in His dealings with that "righteous" man. Nor would we ever "have heard of the patience of Job." Happily for him and for us, Job took his afflictions *as from the Lord*, and did not seek aid from the skill of man to escape from them. Not until "that day" will it be known how much the people of God have lost in following the example of King Asa (2 Chr. 16:12) as is commonly done, instead of that of Job and other men of faith. For it is a most significant and illuminating fact that the Bible gives us but two cases, in all the history of the people of God, of a resort to medical doctors for healing, that of King Asa in the Old Testament, and that of the diseased woman who "suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered but rather grew worse" (Mk. 5:26). How different, and how blessed, with all who put their trust in the Lord as their Healer!

OATHS

At this point James gives a commandment which is evidently very important in the eyes of the Lord, for it is introduced by the words "above all things" (v. 12): "But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath; but let your yea be yea, and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation" (lit. "under judgment").

Here again James follows closely the teaching of Christ in the Sermon on the Mount, where we read: "Again ye have heard that it hath been said by (or

to) them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths; But *I* say unto *you**, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne; nor by the earth; for it is His footstool; neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the Great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be Yea, yea; Nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these, cometh of evil" (Matt. 5:33-37).

These commandments are clear, positive, and comprehensive, covering every sort and manner of swearing, whether for judicial purposes, or any other. Yet they have been most flagrantly disobeyed, and still are, by the great majority of professed "Christians." Is it any wonder there are "many sick among us," and that "many sleep"? And may we not see in this a reason why sickness among the people of God is the next subject dealt with in this Epistle? Inasmuch as the words, "lest ye fall under judgment," are followed by directions concerning sickness, we have an indication of the form God's "judgment" will ordinarily take. The same word "judgment" is used in connection with the sicknesses of saints in 1 Cor. 11:30, 31. This is very significant.

The fact is that the times in which we are living are characterized by the profuse use of oaths, in judicial, official, and business proceedings; and what is usually involved in those proceedings is *money*. (Here is another link between this subject and what goes before.) Thus the holy Name of God is pro-

*"God Who spoke in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken *unto us* by His Son" (Heb. 1:1, 2).

faned and prostituted to the basest and most sordid ends. Men who do not fear God would nevertheless *use His Name* to further their worldly interests, and would invoke His judgment against a fellow-sinner; and those who have no reverence for the Word of God would employ it to force some other liar to tell the truth in a matter wherein he is financially interested. This is a wickedness which that same Bible, on which witnesses are sworn in court, most positively forbids. And shall not God visit for this? And shall not His own people, who have grievously disobeyed in this matter, suffer for it unless they repent and amend their ways?

But we would here raise a solemn question for the “many teachers” to consider. How many of them have taught the people of God the wickedness of taking oaths? How many of them, on the contrary, have encouraged them to sin against God in this way by teaching that the Sermon on the Mount and the Epistle of James are “Jewish”? And what excuse can they offer, in view of the Lord’s plain words which we have just quoted? For let it be specially noticed that whereas *the Jews were permitted by the Law* to bind themselves with oaths, the Lord, in citing that very fact, says “But I say unto you, *Swear not at all*,” thus drawing the clearest line in this respect between the Jewish and Christian dispensations. If we had nothing more than these passages relating to oaths, we would have in them alone the clearest proof that the Sermon on the Mount and the Epistle of James belong to this present dispensation.

Commenting on Matthew 5:33-38, Charles H. Spurgeon says:

“*False swearing* was forbidden of old; but *every*

kind of swearing is forbidden now by the Word of our Lord Jesus. He mentions several forms of oath and forbids them all; and then prescribes simple forms of affirmation or denial, as all that His followers should employ. Notwithstanding much that may be advanced to the contrary, there is no evading the plain sense of this passage that every sort of oath, however solemn or true, is forbidden to a follower of Jesus. Whether in court of law or out of it, the rule is ‘Swear not at all.’ Yet in this ‘Christian’ country we have swearing everywhere, and especially among the lawmakers. Our legislators begin their official existence by swearing. By those who obey the law of the Saviour’s Kingdom, all swearing is set aside, that the simple word of affirmation or denial, calmly repeated, may remain as the simple bond of truth. . . . Christians should not yield to an evil custom, however great the pressure put upon them; but they should abide by the plain and unmistakable command of their Lord and King.”

Mr. D. M. Panton has said :

“The new Lawgiver, superseding Moses, wholly rescinds the Mosaic legislation on Oaths. He throws the two legislative enactments into sharp and studied contrast:—‘It was said to them of old time (by Jehovah: Num. xxx. 1, 2), Thou shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths; but I say unto you, Swear not.’ All vain and rash oaths, all profanity, was already forbidden by the Law of Moses:—‘Ye shall not swear by My name falsely, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God’ (Lev. xix. 12): it was solemn and judicial oaths which the Law enforced in the quotation made by our Lord, and it is *these which Christ forbids*. Thus, so far from the Sermon on the Mount being ‘Jewish,’ it actually forbids what the Law commanded; it forbids it on the ground that it is inconsistent with Grace, that is, on Christian ground; and the Sermon has never been accepted, and never will be, by any Jew except such as become Christians: it is characteristically and fundamentally Christian.”

“The oath is the crux of allegiance to world-powers; it shackles Christian liberty; and in the case of oaths of obedience, the believer unlawfully abdicates his responsibility: it is alien, together with all vows, from simple dependence on the Holy Spirit; it binds the evil conscience, but it is superfluous to the cleansed and truth-loving soul.”

CHAPTER XI

DIRECTIONS FOR AFFLICTION AND SICKNESS

In verse 13 practical directions are given for the two opposite states of *affliction* and *cheerfulness*. “Is any among you afflicted?” (i. e., enduring evil) “let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms.” It is recognized that the saints, while on earth, are to have varied experiences of joy and sorrow. But in *all* seasons there should be an appropriate outflow of the heart to God. Affliction should draw them near to Him in prayer; and doubtless it is often permitted with a view to awakening in our forgetful hearts a sense of our need of Him. On the other hand, a season of joy should call forth special expressions of praise. The word here rendered “sing psalms” is found in Ephesians 5:19, where it is rendered, “making melody.” It signifies broadly the giving forth of expressions of praise, especially by singing.

Among the *afflictions* to which the people of God are liable, sickness is the most common; and hence it is here singled out for special mention. In a similar passage in 1 John 5:14-16, where the general subject is *prayer*, the special instance selected as an occasion when we are to resort to prayer is the sickness of a fellow saint; and in both passages we are reminded that *sickness* and *sin* are closely related. This gives special prominence to the subject of sickness, notwithstanding which God’s way in sickness is ignored by most of those who profess His Name, to their great loss, both of blessing now, and of reward hereafter.

In 1 John 5:16 the word is, “If any man see his

brother *sin a sin* which is not unto death, *he shall ask*, and He shall give him life for them that sin not unto death.” Here we have the duty of the *individual* to pray for the recovery of a fellow saint, even where his sickness is a chastening for sin; and, along with the command to pray, God gives His promise to hear and heal. John, in his first epistle, does not refer to the church and its duty, in case one of its members is sick, but speaks only of the duty of the individual. But James gives the duty of *the church* of which the sick one is a member. We read, “Is any sick among you? let him call for *the elders of the church*; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the Name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins they shall be forgiven him” (vv. 14, 15).

These directions take for granted that the people of God are, as they should be, gathered together as a church of God. This essential matter being assumed (and the Scriptures contemplate nothing else) the passage is quite simple. For, as we should indeed expect, there is nothing in it that is not easily comprehended by the most unlearned saint. That the commandment here given should have been corrupted by the false “church,” and that it should have been wholly cast aside by those who have departed from the New Testament pattern of “the churches of God,” is not to be wondered at. Nevertheless, through the goodness of the Lord, *the pattern* of the church (in the local sense) yet remains, including this exceedingly valuable and practical feature of it, so that they *who will* to walk in God’s ways can do so, and can enjoy

the unspeakable benefits that are always found in the path of obedience.

It should be observed that the first step is to be taken by the sick one. "Let *him* call for the elders of the church." His "call" for the elders puts upon them the responsibility of acting "in the Name of the Lord," in obedience to the simple instructions here given. It is assumed that the sick one will have sought, in the presence of the Lord, to know if his sickness is a chastening for sin; as it generally is, but not always (see 2 Cor. 12:4-11; Phil. 2:29). If so, he will have confessed it to the Lord, and, if the circumstances call for it, will be ready to confess it also to his brethren. This is specially contemplated by the words of verse 16, "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another that ye may be healed."

It has been argued by some, who wish to set this passage aside, that the words "let him," "let them," are only *permissive*, and do not have the force of a command. But this is an error. The English language is defective in having no form to represent the imperative mood in the third person; so we have the weak substitute or makeshift "let him," "let them," as in the words "let not sin reign in your mortal bodies," "let brotherly love continue," "let every soul be subject unto the higher powers," etc. The mood here is the imperative.

SINS AND SICKNESS

It is important to note the close connection in these Scriptures between sins and sickness among the people of God. This connection appears in many other Scriptures also, and is observable as well in common

experience, which shows us that wrongdoings are frequently followed by bodily ailments. The passage in 1 John 5:16 is very strong; because it is there taken as a matter of course that sin in a believer (a "brother") will be visited by loss of life or of health; and for that very reason it lays upon every saint who may have knowledge of the sin the duty of asking that the life of the erring brother be spared. Moreover, with this command is coupled the encouraging promise that the prayer, when offered in obedience to the command, shall be heard: "He shall ask, and He (God) shall give him life,"—provided only that the sin be not of so grave a character (as in Acts 5:4; 1 Cor. 11:30) as to be "unto death."

Likewise in James 5:15 the words, "and if he have committed sins they shall be forgiven him," point to the connection between sins and sicknesses, though they imply (what other Scriptures clearly declare) that sickness is not always due to some wrongdoing of the sick one.

These passages in James and 1 John give the Lord's commands to His people in this gospel-dispensation touching the exceedingly important subject of sickness. Those who sweep them away, whether on the ground that they are "Jewish" or upon any other pretext, and who "teach men so," take upon themselves an appalling responsibility. For in so doing they leave the household of faith without any directions at all for their sicknesses. And this is indeed the object of such teaching, to the end that the saints may feel easy in their consciences while seeking help and deliverance through the agencies developed and trusted by the world.

NONE OTHER NAME

Prominence is given by James to "the Name of the Lord" as putting before us the One in Whose Name—that is, by Whose authority—sins are forgiven and sicknesses are healed. Thus when the lame man was healed by Peter and John the Temple authorities demanded to know "by what Name" it had been done. This points to the great foundation truth of the Gospel that only in the name of Jesus Christ is their power from God to deal with sins and sickness.

We would naturally recall, in this connection, the words of Psalm 103:2, 3: "Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits; Who forgiveth *all thine iniquities*; who healeth *all thy diseases*." Also the words of Christ in healing the paralytic: "But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to *forgive sins* (then saith He to the sick of the palsy) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house" (Mat. 9:6).

The same "power" that forgives sins is needed, and is promised, for the healing of diseases, the latter being the outward effect and the former the inward effect of the same cause. For, as the cause is one, the remedy is one. It follows that any teaching which would "postpone" the promise of healing by the direct action of God, in response to the obedience of faith, would equally avail to postpone also the promise of forgiveness of sins. God has joined these two together; let us not presume to put them asunder.

That power is inseparably connected—both for His glory, and for our good—with the Name of Jesus Christ. Moreover, whatsoever is done "in the Name of the Lord" is done by His authority. This may be

readily understood by reference to the question put by the priests and rulers to Peter and John concerning the healing of the impotent man, to which we have already referred. What they demanded to know was, “By what power, or by *what name*, have ye done this?” Peter’s answer was, “Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that, *by the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth*, Whom ye crucified, Whom God raised from the dead, doth this man stand here before you whole.”

That Name and that power, which have not changed, are now lodged with the churches of God, whose elders are commanded to act therein for the benefit of “any” who are “sick” among the people of God, and who “call” for them. The responsibility of the sick one is to “call for the elders of the church,” and it then becomes *their* responsibility to carry out the command of this Scripture for the benefit of the sick one.

The words “and the Lord *shall raise him up*” imply that the sickness is of a nature to cause prostration, that is, an illness of a serious character.

The anointing with oil is a symbolic action, bringing to mind the fact that the mortal body of the believer is “the temple of the Holy Ghost,” and that its “members” have been set free from the service of sin, and consecrated to the service of God (1 Cor. 6:19, 20; Rom. 6:13; 12:1, 2). No healing virtue, or virtue of any sort, is ascribed to the oil.

THE PRAYER OF FAITH

“*The prayer of faith shall save the sick.*” It is not to be supposed from these words that “the prayer of faith” is some special and peculiar kind of prayer,

such that only certain persons, specially endowed, can offer it. It is clear that "the elders of the church," whosoever they may be, are *required* and *expected* to carry out these simple instructions, including the praying of "the prayer of faith." In fact any and all prayer which is not the outcome of faith is not *prayer* at all, howsoever excellent may be its form or object. What the words, "of faith," point to, is the great lesson of chapter 2, according to which lesson, faith without works is dead. One of the "works" of real or live faith is *prayer*; and that is what is called for in this case. To the same effect are the words of chapter 1:6, "But let him ask *in faith*, nothing wavering" (or doubting). Faith is simply acting in trustful obedience to the Word of God. Hence, when the elders act in obedience to this Word of the Lord they are praying the prayer of faith.

The words of 1 John 5:16, to which we have already made reference, show plainly that the prayer of faith is simply the prayer which is offered in obedience to the commandment of the Lord. His command is "he shall ask," and hence, when anyone acts in obedience to that commandment, he is offering the prayer of faith. There are, however, some in our day who would set aside James 5:14, 15 on the ground that it requires, for carrying it out, faith of some special kind which is not to be expected of the saints in these times. But if there is no faith to pray for the sick in obedience to a plain command, how can there be faith for any kind of prayer? (For verse 16 contains the express *command*, "pray one for another that ye may be healed.") Is it any wonder, when such views as these are allowed to find expression and

acceptance in many quarters, that much of what passes for "prayer" is merely the routine performance of a pious exercise, a mere putting together of well worn phrases—often indeed with admirable skill and neatness—but without any real laying hold of the promises of God by faith, and without any real heart-confidence in His faithfulness?

We heartily agree with what was said by that man of faith, George Mueller, on this subject:

"Some say, 'Oh, I shall never have the gift of faith Mr. Mueller has got. He has the gift of faith.' This is the greatest mistake—it is a great error—there is not a particle of truth in it. My faith is just the same kind of faith that all of God's children have had. It is the same kind that Simon Peter had, and all Christians may obtain the like faith. My faith is their faith, though there may be more of it because my faith has been a little more developed by exercise than theirs; but their faith is precisely the faith I exercise, only, with regard to the degree, mine may be more strongly exercised."

We would here declare our deep conviction that it is by bodily sicknesses, more than by any other trial, that the saints of God, and those who claim to be such, are tested as to *the reality of their faith*. If the writer of these lines had not found it possible, in extreme bodily sickness, to trust himself and those dear to Him to God's care, using only the "means" which *He* has appointed, he could not be sure he was really trusting Him at all, or for anything. The apostle Peter writes to the children of God saying that the *trial* of their faith is much more precious than of gold

which perisheth (1 Pet. 1:7). This tells us that faith is a thing which God tries or tests. But He can try it *only where it exists*. Suppose the test comes, and we act under it according to the ways of the unbelieving world? How is our "faith" manifested? And how can we be sure we *have* real faith in God at all? It is both significant and appropriate that the commands by which, more than by any other, the faith of God's professed people is tried, should come to them through that servant of Christ (James) who was inspired to instruct them as to what real "faith" is. And since, as we have already stated, true faith consists in simply taking God at His word, and doing as He has said, it may well be that this passage has been given in order, among other purposes, to test the faith of God's people in regard to a matter wherein the natural heart finds it so easy to seek unto the arm of flesh and to put its trust in human expedients.

That the test furnished by this passage, which tells God's people what they are to do when "any" are sick *among them*, is one from which the heart of man instinctively shrinks, is made evident by the various reasons and arguments that have been advanced in the effort to show that this important passage of Scripture is "not for us." But we are at a loss to conceive how any who assume to teach the people of God can hope to be excused for misunderstanding and misapplying the meaning of words so plain as these: "Is *any* sick among *you*"; or of these, "let him call for *the* elders of *the* church." The word "you" cannot possibly refer to any but those of whom James says that "Of His own will begat He *us* with the word of truth" (1:18); and the meaning of the words

“the elders of the church” is not reasonably open to dispute (see Acts 20:17).

We are much concerned because of the suffering which the saints have sustained in consequence of their neglect of God’s provisions for His sick ones, and their failure to follow His plain directions. And we are concerned also for those teachers who have taken upon themselves the grave responsibility of teaching God’s people to set those directions aside, and to resort instead to human “remedies” (so called). For our part, whatever the present consequences may be, as we desire to be pure from the blood of all men, we shun not to declare *all* the counsel of God (Acts 20:26, 27). Furthermore, having walked in this narrow way of faith and obedience for a score of years, we can unreservedly commend it to our fellow saints; and can bear testimony that “He is faithful Which promised.”

THE PRAYER OF FAITH SHALL SAVE

The following note, taken from Alford’s Greek New Testament on the above words (James 5:15) is worthy of our attention:

“Clearly here, considering that the forgiveness of sins is separately stated afterwards, *sosei* can only be used of corporeal healing, not of the salvation of the soul. This has not always been recognized. James is enforcing the efficacy of the prayer of faith in afflictions (v. 13). Of such efficacy he adduces one special instance. In sickness let the sick man inform the elders of the church. Let them, representing the congregation of the faithful, pray over the sick man, accompanying that prayer with the symbolic and

sacramental act of anointing with oil in the Name of the Lord. Then the prayer of faith shall heal the sick man, and the Lord shall bring him up out of his sickness; and even if it were occasioned by some sin, that sin shall be forgiven him. Such is *the simple and undeniable sense of the apostolic argument for the efficacy of prayer.*"

We conclude our comments on this passage by quoting the following article, which lately appeared in an English periodical, and which we deem worthy of earnest consideration.

"I THOUGHT—"

"‘I thought,’ said Naaman (2 Kings 5:11). ‘I verily thought,’ said Paul, before Agrippa (Acts 26:9). ‘Thou thoughtest,’ says God, to the wicked in Psalm 50:21. Yes; but they all thought what was not true. And so men ‘think’ today, and puzzle their brains, to find out means of dealing with sickness and disease, that will commend themselves to them and other thinkers.

“But where are we told to think out the course to take in such important circumstances? Has God a way? If so, has He revealed it? Is there such a thing as a hint that, in this particular, God commends the old human plan ‘every one to his own way’? (Isaiah 53:6).

“What does He say about *our* ways, and *our* thoughts? It is this:—‘Let the wicked *forsake* his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts’ (Isaiah 55:7). It is drastic advice, but it must be done if we are ever to arrive at The Truth. To forsake one’s cautiously planned way, and one’s well weighed

thoughts, is not a small matter ; and it cannot be done, except the glory of God's way, and God's thoughts, dawn upon the seeker.

"Every man will continue to 'think' for himself until he learns to submit to God's thoughts, expressed in His Word. If one were to judge by the practice prevailing among the professed people of God, and also among the prudent of the world, one might well conclude that, as regards sickness, and provision for it, the people of God had been left without a revelation of His mind.

"But He *has* made known His will in the matter, though a great proportion of His people have not the disposition to seek diligently to know it. There are various other methods of dealing with sickness that are not prescribed by God. These are sought with avidity by the majority of saints, as by the people of the world.

"Is it not full time for believers to challenge the methods they follow in dealing with the consequences of sin ? Has God singled out the effects of sin in the mortal body as not included in the work of redemption ? I have spirit, soul, and body. Did Christ die for *me*, or for two-thirds of me ? The Bible teaches no fractional salvation, although preachers often do.

"Observe the awful immensity and the ever-present crushing weight of disease among Adam's descendants ! If not *the* greatest it is *among* the greatest of problems that tax the resources of men. Small wonder that men undervalue Redemption if there is nothing in it of deliverance from what is commonly their greatest burden.

"But in truth it is far otherwise. The atonement of Christ covers all the consequences of sin in every

part of my being. Therefore, if I am Christ's by purchase, I neglect His salvation, if I seek to be healed from any sin-caused morbid condition in any way but via Redemption. Any other way—however highly esteemed among men—is a wrong way.

“‘Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses’ must be no more explained away than ‘His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree’ (Matthew 8:17; 1 Peter 2:24). Among orthodox believers it is readily believed that the sins of the ‘woman in the city which was a sinner’ (Luke 7:37) needed the blood to make atonement; but it appears not to be commonly observed that the disease, the issue of blood, in that other woman needed atonement also (Luke 8:43).”

CHAPTER XII

THE EXAMPLE OF ELIJAH. THE LATTER RAIN. CONVERTING A BROTHER

The concluding words of the Epistle of James are full of encouragement, and are well calculated to support and strengthen us in that without which it is impossible to please God or to lead a life which brings glory to Him and blessing to ourselves—*our faith*. Thus we are reminded at the end of the Epistle of that which is prominent in it throughout—practical faith in the living God Who hears and answers believing prayer.

The benefit of the example of the men of faith will be lost to us if we regard them (as we are prone to do) as persons of a different order from ourselves. Therefore, in recalling to our minds the wonderful things that were brought to pass through the prayer of Elijah, the writer of our Epistle impresses upon us the fact that the great prophet was a man of like passions, or feelings, as ourselves. It follows that results of the same sort may be accomplished through *our* prayers.

Elijah is mentioned as an illustration of the general statement that “the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.” Hence we are to learn from Elijah’s history, not what a mighty prophet may do, but what a “righteous man” may do, through effectual supplications to God. The only conditions here laid down are, *first*, that the man must be “righteous” (having, as we understand it, the righteousness of faith, and also practical righteous-

ness) and *second*, that his supplication be fervent and effectual. These words throw further light upon the expression, “the prayer of faith.”

What was brought to pass through the prayers of Elijah is stated in verses 17 and 18: “He prayed earnestly” (literally *with prayer he prayed*) “that it might not rain; and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.”

There is doubtless much instruction for us in these verses, and instruction which is well worth seeking for. Let us in the first place take notice of the statement that Elijah “prayed *with prayer*.” His was *real* prayer. He was consciously in the presence of God asking of One Who “is and is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.” Everything depends upon our praying, not with mere words, but with prayer. Evidently Elijah’s fervent prayer, and his confidence in praying it, were based upon some knowledge that had been given him concerning the will of God. Otherwise he would not have known what to ask; or when to ask that the heavens be closed, and when that they be opened to give rain. It is only when “we ask anything *according to His will*” that we can have “confidence” in asking (1 J. 5:14, 15). How the knowledge of God’s will was imparted to Elijah is not recorded; but we know that God communicated with him frequently. In the case of Daniel, the information on which he based his model prayer (Dan. 9:2-19), was “understood by books,” that is, the Scriptures, and in particular the writings of Jeremiah.

We also have the Scriptures to make known to us

the will of God, and in the case before us, God's will concerning the sick among His people is plainly stated; and not only so, but we are expressly *commanded* to pray for one another that we may be healed. Hence, we are supplied with all that is needed for fervent and *confident* prayer; and we are without excuse if we fail in this plain duty. Would it surprise us to hear that many of God's people have died because of failure and neglect of the command here given to the saints? Let us then awake to a sense of our responsibility in regard to those that are sick.

There is another side to the lesson; for not only is the knowledge of the will of God needed as a basis for effectual prayer (see Rom. 8:26, 27), but the prayers of the saints play a real part in the *accomplishment of His will*. Here is where our natural reason would lead us astray; for we would argue that, if it be the will of God to do a certain thing, He *will* do it regardless of what we may do or fail to do, and that therefore our prayers would be superfluous. But the Word of God teaches clearly, in the passages we have cited, that God calls His people into fellowship with Himself in the doing of His good will, and that He *makes use of their prayers to that end*.

THE LATTER RAIN

Two striking instances are given, in the chapter before us, of rich and fruitful blessing from God following a season of sore trial and affliction. One is the case of Job, the other that of Israel in the days of Elijah.

With Job the turning point came when his protestations of self-righteousness were turned into the confession "I am vile," and when he besought God

to "hear," saying "I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job. 40:4; 42:4-6). Then the Lord ordered his three friends to offer up a burnt offering (and a *very large* one) through Job, and said, "My servant Job shall pray for you." And it is recorded that, "The Lord turned the captivity of Job, *when he prayed for his friends*; also the Lord gave Job *twice as much as he had before*" (42:7-10).

Turning now to Elijah we would recall that in his days the wickedness of Israel had culminated in the building again of Jericho, the city of the curse. Then Elijah suddenly appeared and pronounced the judgment of God: "There shall not be dew nor rain these years but according to my word" (1 K. 16:34, 17:1). Then followed the three and a half years of sore distress, during which time Elijah was received by the Gentile widow, whose son was raised from the dead, after her sin had been brought to remembrance. In this we can see, especially with the aid of the Lord's reference to the same incident (Lu. 4:24-26), a shadow of the reception of the Word of God by the Gentiles, bringing *conviction of sin* and *new life* to them, during the time the blessing of God is withheld from the earthly nation of Israel. Then came the sin-offering and the intercession of Elijah on Mount Carmel, whereby the people were brought down on their faces before God; and then followed *his seven times repeated prayer for rain*. It is of interest to note that Elijah gave to Ahab the assurance that rain was about to come even before he prayed for it (1 K. 18:41). This showed his strong confidence.

The bearing of these incidents on the teaching of James 5:11-16 is easily seen, for we have in that passage the Lord's teaching concerning seasons of

affliction by sickness, especially when sin is the cause thereof, and we have also the appointed way of reaching “the end of the Lord” through confession and intercessory prayer.

But the lesson seems to have a wider application. In verse 7 (Jam. 5) is the exhortation to be patient unto the coming of the Lord, even as “the husbandman waiteth for the precious *fruit of the earth* * * until he receive the early and the latter *rain*.” There is an obvious connection between this and verse 18, where we read that Elijah prayed again, “and the heaven *gave rain*, and the earth *brought forth her fruit*.”

There is much in these Scriptures to encourage the people of God, who are now waiting in patience for the coming of the Lord from heaven, and who meantime are passing through a season of dearth and affliction, to seek, by confession of their sins and by fervent and effectual prayer, for such a “rain” of blessing from on high as will bring the work of the Gospel throughout the whole world to a speedy completion. It is plainly to be seen, moreover, that these are the days of the heaping up of wealth by the “rich men,” and of the calamities that are feared by them. And since we have the assurance that when the days of the vast accumulations of worldly riches arrive, then “the coming of the Lord draweth nigh,” there is every incentive now for us to act in response to these exhortations of Scripture.

There is, in the Old Testament, much that is suggestive in connection with the subject of “the latter rain.” It would be aside from our present purpose to attempt an exposition of those Scriptures. But, in view of extravagant and fanciful doctrines which,

within recent years, have sprung up and have spread far and wide, it would be well to bear in mind that the mighty “spirit of error” often seeks, and with great success, to cast discredit upon important and seasonable truth by raising up a counterfeit of it, or by associating it with some fanatical movement, or some system of false doctrine. By such means the entire subject of the Lord’s second coming and also that of trusting God for the care and healing of the mortal body, have been discredited in the eyes of many who do not take the trouble, in the light of Scripture, to distinguish the genuine from the counterfeit.

CONVERTING A BROTHER

The last words of our Epistle manifest in a special way that spirit of love for the brethren which pervades the whole.

No greater service to the erring brother can be rendered than that of “converting” him, that is to say, bringing him back again to the right ways of the Lord. It is easier to censure a brother who goes wrong, or even to bring him under chastening or discipline for his fault, than to seek, in grace and lowliness of mind, to recover and restore him. We shall do well, therefore, to let these words, which bring our precious and practical Epistle to a close, sink into our hearts:

“Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.”

What these words call for is a ministry of love to the erring brother. It is written concerning our

Lord Jesus Christ, in His present office of High Priest in heaven, that He is able to “have compassion on the ignorant, and on *them that are out of the way*” (Heb. 5:2); and it is part of His work as Priest and Advocate to seek the recovery of such. For it is of erring *saints* that these Scriptures speak. The same “compassion” towards the ignorant and erring should be found in us; and we too should be ever ready to take part in the same ministry of restoration.

We are reminded by this passage of the Lord’s words to Peter, when that warm-hearted and impulsive disciple was protesting his love and devotion to his Lord (which indeed was real, though he knew not his own weakness) to whom the Lord said, “I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not; and when thou art converted” (or turned back again) “strengthen thy brethren.”

There is a conversion which is necessary before we can receive forgiveness of our sins and enter into the kingdom of heaven (Mat. 18:3); and there is also a conversion needed before we can strengthen our brethren.

This lesson is taught also by Paul in Galatians 6:1, 2, where he says: “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual *restore* such an one, in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted” (or put to the proof). The strong implication is that, had we been placed in precisely the same circumstances as the erring brother, we might, and probably would, have failed under the trial, even as he did. The very form in which the lesson is expressed by Paul is strikingly like that adopted by James.

The former points out that, in thus bearing one an-

other's burdens, we "fulfil the law of Christ." The latter (James) reveals the *great results* that may be accomplished through this ministry of restoring the erring brother. For he tells us that "he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and hide a multitude of sins." The "soul" is that of the *believer*, and the "death" referred to is death in its ordinary sense of the separation of soul and body. This is in accordance with the New Testament usage of the word "soul," as seen, for example, in the Lord's parable of the rich man, who made great provision for the enjoyment of his "soul," but to whom God said, "Thou fool, this night *thy soul* shall be required of thee" (Luke 12:16-21).

As pointed out in our comments on James 1:21, the *soul* is the *natural life* of the creature, the seat of the experience of sensations of pleasure and pain. It should be carefully distinguished from "spirit" and "heart" (see 1 Cor. 2:14, where "natural" is literally "*soulical*," in contrast with "spiritual"; 1 Cor. 15:44-46, where the same contrast is seen; 1 Thess. 5:23; Heb. 4:12, &c.).

To "save a soul from death" is to perform a great service to a fellow saint; for it prolongs his opportunities for the bringing forth of fruit to the glory of God, and for gaining for himself eternal rewards. So we have once more an example of the *practical* character of this Epistle.

The words "save a soul from death" connect the concluding passage with what immediately precedes it concerning ministry to, and prayer for, the recovery of the sick believer. The word "save" in verse 20 is identical (even to the mood and tense) with the word "save" in verse 15. And the meaning is pre-

cisely the same in each verse; for it is the saving of *the soul* from death that is in contemplation in each case. The relation between the two parts of the chapter is still closer in that in both the danger of death is because of sin.

“And shall hide a multitude of sins.” The word “hide” is literally to *cover*. Peter uses the same word in saying, “And above all things have fervent love among yourselves; for love shall *cover* the multitude of sins” (1 Pet. 4:10).

This might be taken to mean to cover as with silence, thus hiding a wrong doing from others, as in Proverbs 17:10, “He that *covereth* a transgression seeketh love” (see also Prov. 10:12 and 11:13). But there is another Greek word for cover by silence. It is found in 1 Cor. 13:17, where “Love *beareth* all things” is literally *covereth* all things.

So we conclude, both from the context, and from the meaning of the word itself, that James and Peter are speaking of a restoring ministry which turns an erring *brother* back to the ways of the Lord, and which, through bringing him to repentance and confession of his sins, procures the forgiveness of these, even though they be a “multitude.” For it is written that “if we confess *our* sins, He (God) is faithful and just to *forgive us our sins* and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 J. 1:9). Thus, by such a ministry as that to which we are called by the last verse of James, we may not only be the means of saving a precious life for further usefulness in the world, but may also be instrumental in the putting away of sins which otherwise would confront the wrongdoer at the judgment seat of Christ.

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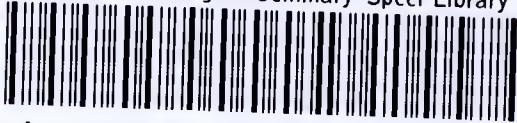
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